Lifestyle
Isabel Díaz, the realist

Entertainment
Pia's pictures of happy memories

Business
Wanted: 'Bridging' leaders

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Schumacher makes it 2 in a row

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FPJ, Fog unity: Maayos pa ba?

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

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website: www.inq7.net

Poll campaigners form text brigades

Filipino Siamese twins successfully separated

Sacking of Dolphy linked to bailout

Reaction of GMA: I don't even know show

By Carlos Pilar, Christine O. Avendaño and Juliet Labog-Javellana

THE CANCELLATION of top comedian Dolphy's "Home Along Da Airport" TV show by ABS-CBN may have been politically motivated and linked to the multibillion-peso government bailout of Maynilad Water Services, a company controlled by the Lopez family which also owns the media giant.

"It was clearly politically motivated because of Dolphy's support for President Macapagal-Arroyo's main challenger, actor Fernando Poe Jr.," Mahmud Gomez and Asenda Ugalde Reyna, son of Dolphy's close bit friends, said in a statement.

In a press statement, Poe's media bureau chief Rodolfo Reyes said "This is another example of Dolphy's show could be a casualty or 'bonus' that Malacañang had squeezed from the Lopezes in the bailout of the Lopez-owned Meralco Holdings from the debt-ridden Maynilad Water Services, which the government had possibly taken out of in exchange for the hasty 'go-signal' to hike by prime rate, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, the running mate of President Macapagal-Arroyo." (See related story on this page.)

Gomez, chair of the group

CARRYING torches, people form a peace symbol during an antiwar rally at Heroes' Square in Budapest, Hungary, on the first anniversary of the US-led invasion of Iraq.

US-led coalition now a lot less willing

By Armando Doronila

A WAVE of anti-American demonstrations swept the globe during the weekend as the world marked the first anniversary of the US-led invasion of Iraq. Demonstrating the anti-Americanism were thousands of people in the United States, Spain, Japan, Australia, India, Taiwan, France, Germany, Greece, Italy and the Netherlands, and in some Middle East cities.

While the answer proves never generally under-by protesters in Madrid, the US Embassy cloaked with police in Cairo, anti-American feelings ran high as demonstrators burned US flags.

ANALYSIS

Unfazed by the manifestation, US President George W. Bush called for "bolder action" against terrorism, saying the March 11 bombing in Madrid as a recent for US allies not to capitulate to threats of further attacks by terrorists associated with Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda.

"Any sign of weakness or retreat simply solidifies terrorist violence and invites more violence for all nations," Bush said. "It is the duty of every government to fight and destroy the threat to our people."

Bush's speech was intended to

Taxpayers urged: Sue to stop gov't takeover

By TJ Burgonio and Gil Cabacungan Jr.

SAN MIGUEL, Bulacan—Rose to nullify the deal? Go to court.

Former Solicitor General Frank Chavez urged taxpayers yesterday to petition the Supreme Court to stop the government from taking over the heavily indebted Manila Water Services.

The takeover is seen by some businessmen as a bailout of the Lopez family which controls the water utility's major shareholder Benpres Holdings.

Chavez, a commercial candidate of the Alyansa ng Pag-asa, said the people should file a petition to nullify the deal, which he said was a clear case of government's "condonation of private sector indebtedness."

The deal had "shades of corruption" prevalent during the Marcos regime, according to Chavez.

He said the planned takeover

Group seeks bets' agenda for jobless

By Edson Cortes Tandoc Jr. Intern

ONE out of every four Filipinos who is ready to work is either jobless or underemployed. But all the presidential candidates are not promising concrete plans to address the unemployment crisis, officers of the Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL) said yesterday.

"If they could not present any clear program to address this crisis, then they have no business running for the presidency," APL chair Daniel Edralin said at a press conference.

Clarence Pascual, consultant of the Labor Education and Research Network, said the unemployment rate today was higher than that during the 1998 Asian

Oops! It's Bro. Eddie, not Eddie Gil

By Norman Bordadora

IT WILL probably take more than the Commission on Elections to bury Eddie Gil for good.

The disqualified presidential candidate's namesake, Bro. Eddie Villanueva, was on the same Philippine Airlines flight from Cagayan de Oro City as fellow-candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson yesterday when the pilot's

THE CHARM OFFENSIVE

Discipline, mem'ry for names, places, forever young

Editor's Note: The Inquirer starts a series of essays on the campaign style and impact of the five presidential candidates, a new quarter for each. In alphabetical order, the series starts with President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

By Ezra G. Dipasupil
Deck Editor

(Last of two parts)

EXPERIENCE might just be the best teacher for Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on the campaign trail, and maybe all the ways...for the second time...in Malacañang.

And this does not only mean her love and a half year remain in the Palace, time, she says, spent making a "down payment" that she hopes to pay in full if the Filipino electorate lets her.

Experience is the hallmark of her 64 years...the flamboyant wig Estrellanon at

SAN PEDRO, LAGUNA: Surveys show her finally catching up with rival Fernando Poe Jr., but the President's camp is not about to have the victory flag—yet. Her campaigners say it's still anybody's ball game.

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: The eastern section of Luzon will experience rains and thunderstorms while little cloudiness is occasionally cloudy over the rest of Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and thunderstorms. —Correct Weather

Second FRONTPAGE

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rain
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rain
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rain
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Cotabato	Cloudy with Rain
Iloilo	Partly Cloudy	Dipolog	Cloudy with Rain
Puerto Princesa	Partly Cloudy	Surigao	Partly Cloudy
Legaspi	Partly Cloudy	Butuan	Cloudy with Rain
Virac	Thunderstorms	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rain
Tacloban	Cloudy with Rain	Davao	Cloudy with Rain

Another Noli accuser surfaces

DE CASTRO

By Michael Lim Ubac

ANOTHER alleged extortion victim of vice presidential candidate Noli de Castro surfaced yesterday to denounce the senator for supposedly asking P2 million from him in exchange for a favorable feature on his prime-time current affairs program 'Magandang Gabi Bayan.'

Rafael T. Ingle, however, said that he refused to pay the amount, resulting in a "wicked, terrible and biased episode" on MGB. The TV episode was later used by authorities to tie Ingle to the disappearance of his wife seven years ago.

Ingle last week executed an affidavit to back up the criminal and administrative charges he is set to file against De Castro this week. A copy of the affidavit was obtained by the Inquirer.

Ingle, for comment, De Castro quickly dismissed the latest accusation against him as "politically motivated."

"Through his lawyer Jesse Andres, Sir Castro said Ingle should have filed the case against him soon after the MGB episode was aired seven years ago.

In his affidavit, Ingle blamed De Castro for the injustice and hurt that befell him during his "long and unfounded detention."

He said MGB destroyed his good name, family and livelihood.

Ingle was imprisoned for seven years, until a Manila court acquitted him in January 2003.

He said that he intends to file cases against De Castro, his TV crew and ABS-CBN before the Office of the Ombudsman, the Department of Justice, the Bohlen Committee of the Senate, and the court of law.

"It is an uphill battle for me, indeed, for I have no money and no resources, but it is a battle I have to fight and win if only to reap Mr. Noli de Castro and his cronies-minded minions from continuing with their syndrome of extortion," he said.

Ingle worked abroad as a contract worker in the 1970s. Upon his return in 1983, he put up a number of restaurants, pension houses and a small hotel whose construction was not finished. He also invested P5 million in a coal ceramic project in Mabalacat.

But on Aug. 12, 1991, his business took a different turn after his estranged wife, Daisy Ingle, was reported missing.

Desperate for assistance, her disappearance is unexplained.

Then one day, Ingle recalled that an MGB crew interviewed him and offered to help him find his missing wife.

After the interview, one of the MGB crew later told him to prepare P2 million so that his episode would be favorable to him.

On the last Saturday of September 1995 when the TV episode was aired, Ingle was shocked to find out that De Castro had portrayed him as a very bad fellow, saying that I had kidnapped my own wife and that I was a member of a criminal syndicate.

He said it was a "complete falsehood to crime ... I did not kidnap my wife and I certainly did not a member of any criminal syndicate. Clearly, my refusal to pay Mr. Noli de Castro and his crew the P2 million that tried to extort from me matter led to the episode."

KNP solons joining Ping, says Butz

By Norman Bordadora

A GROUP of congressmen and other local officials from the Kaalyan ng Pilipinas (Kaalyan) to Lacson are set to defect to the camp of presidential bet Gen. Fidel "Ping" Lacson, Makati Rep. Agapito "Butz" Aquino claimed yesterday.

Aquino, talunit ng Partido ng Masang Pilipino secretary general and Lacson's chief supporter, said the KNP congressmen and Lacson's group are scheduled to meet this afternoon.

Aquino, who didn't join Lacson's campaign sortie in northern Mindanao over the weekend, confirmed the transfer was a done deal and the meeting this afternoon would only be ceremonial.

"It's a done deal. We just have to iron out certain details of their joining us," said Aquino in a telephone interview.

Reports said the KNP congressmen and local officials were frustrated with the way the KNP campaign was being run, particularly at the local level.

Aquino earlier said that the period from March to April would be crucial for the opposition camps of Lacson and the KNP represented by senatorial candidate Sen. Fernando Poe Jr.

It also comes in the wake of the start of the local campaign period last March 20.

"This is already the start of the bandwagon. They are starting to come out," said Aquino of the expected shift of loyalties in Lacson.

Lacson on Saturday told reporters he group of congressmen and local officials had sent feelers to join his camp.

"Out of courtesy, I don't want to preempt our secretary general ... You could say that it's already the start of a bandwagon[but we can not act on it]to be[sic] until we have declared it," Lacson said in Mountain City Bukidnon.

'Debate no-shows face backlash'

By TJ Burgonio

SAN MIGUEL, Bulacan—Presidential candidate Raul Roco yesterday warned his rivals they could face an electoral backlash if they didn't show up for the first presidential debate tonight.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, Peruvanda Poe Jr. and Sen. Pimentel Lacson all declined the invitation to attend the debate dubbed "Tuntunan sa Pulitika 2004."

Mr. Macapagal said she was not joining the debate since Poe was not going to be there. Lacson followed suit after learning Mr. Macapagal had backed out.

Only Roco and evangelist Bro. Eddie Villanueva confirmed their attendance at the televised forum on population, poverty and human development at 7 p.m. at the ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.'s studios in Quezon City.

"I hope they forgive all those who are absent. If you're absent, then you're out. Imagine, now's asking help from the public, and yet you can't do it upfront," Roco, standard bearer of the Alyansa ng Pagasa, said when asked how women's groups should handle the no-shows.

"Come election day, the women should forget those cumbancas," he said.

The debate was organized by the Philippine Legislators Committee on Population and Development, Pulse Asia Inc. and the Philippine Political Science Association in cooperation with ABS-CBN.

MANILA FEELS MADRID'S PAIN

Spanish Ambassador to the Philippines Ignacio Sagaz comforts a woman companion after the Mass celebrated yesterday at Manila's San Agustin Church for the 200 people killed in the March 11 bombings in Madrid. The body of the lone Filipino fatality of the blasts, 28-year-old Ana Reynaldo Fornes, has been brought to the hometown of Santiago City, Isabela, for burial on Wednesday.

Palace behind extort try on Japanese firms–Tatad

By Christine O. Avendaño

DAVAO CITY—A group identified with Malacañang was accused yesterday of trying to extort $3 million from three Japanese firms which bidded for the $204-million Light Railway Transit extension project, allegedly to raise funds for the election campaign of President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Reelection-ng Kaglaloloang Pilipino senatorial bet Sen. Feraindez Tatad, who exposed the extortion try, said sought a rebidding of the project which will extend the LRT line from Baclaran to Bicutan(sic).

Tatad also revealed that there was a "rush" to have the project awarded to the winning bidder.

At a news conference here, Tatad said the senators had told Abs-Cbn a group "closely identified with Malacañang" allegedly asked the three companies Fitto—Kinetsu, Hanshin(sic) and Mitsubishi—that submitted bids for the project to shell out a "percentage fee of $3 million."

"Whether or not, the companies complied, we can't say," Tatad said, noting that he had yet to get the "smoking gun" on the alleged extortion try from his sources who were in the "inside" of the three Japanese firms.

He said he had in his possession documents involving the project, including the Department of Justice recommendation to cancel last month.

The DOJ has recommended the rebidding of the project to the Department of Trans. portation and Communications, the government agency implementing the project.

Apparently Tatad said a complaint had been filed to last prompted the DOJ to look into the pre-bidding procedure of the LRT project. This they led the justice department to recommend to "restart the bidding process because of some obvious violation of some bid security requirements," he said.

Tatad said that Mitsubishi was earlier taken out of the bidding process after its technical proposal was rejected.

Reyes new bane of smugglers

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has tapped anti-kidnapping czar Angelo Reyes to head another task force, this time aimed at fighting smugglers.

The President appointed Reyes to head the new National Anti-Smuggling Task Force (NAFTT) on top of handling the National Anti-Kidnapping Task Force (NAKTF) as its chief.

Lt. Gen. Edgardo Aprecio, Reyes' spokesperson, said members of the business community had requested that Reyes also lead the fight against smugglers.

"They were apparently happy with his performance in the anti-kidnapping front," Reyes explained.

Whether or not Reyes will be able to handle another task force, this time aimed at fighting smugglers.

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Military to remain on alert after polls

THE MILITARY will be on full alert until after the winners in the May 10 elections have been proclaimed.

In a 10-point policy guideline issued last week, Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita said that during the post-election period, troops would stay put in areas they had been assigned to by the Commission on Elections.

"The conduct of security operations and the safe transport of election personnel and paraphernalia must be ensured. The GWO-AFP must remain on alert status until the result of the national and local elections are completed and winners are rightfully proclaimed," Ermita said.

He also reiterated his earlier order to military personnel to stay apolitical and keep out of partisan politics in this year's elections. "None of our officials and personnel must engage in any political activity except to cast their votes on the day of election and perform the tasks prescribed by the Comelec," he said.

The defense secretary also said the military "must safeguard the conduct of elections on election day, ensure the security, secrecy and sanctity of the ballot, and safeguard the canvassing, and all election paraphernalia until the winning candidates are proclaimed by the Comelec and the Senate." Alexis Romero

SUERTRES 4 3 6 (for exact order)

SUPERLOTTO 6/49 5 5 6 14 27 35

METRO

E-mail: metro@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Abelardo S. Ulanday

Malacañang pushes ID for Muslims

THE GOVERNMENT of President Macapagal-Arroyo has endorsed a program requiring Muslims in Metro Manila to carry identification cards to help alleviate rampant attacks in the metropolis.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye told ANC radio that the ID system for Muslims was a "good initiative."

Bunye stated that the suggestion requiring residency of Islamic communities in Metro Manila came from Muslim leaders themselves.

Thirty leaders of Muslim communities in Metro Manila volunteered to adopt an ID system for residents within their jurisdictions to help the government go after terrorists and criminals hiding among them.

The ID system is expected to take effect this week.

"This is a big help to our peace and order campaign when communities themselves implement their own ID system," Bunye said.

He added, "If coordinated with authorities, communities can monitor the movement of newcomers in their areas."

Muslim leaders volunteered to issue IDs to their members in an effort to disprove belief that they had anything to do with terrorists.

They also denied that mind-set that associated them with lawless elements. AD Cathcoconjan

18-YEAR 'WAR'

Palanan folk win battle vs truck firm

RESIDENTS of Antheus Avenue and Washer Street in Barangay Palanan, Makati City, can finally breathe easy after the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) denied with finality the motion for reconsideration of the JAC Trucking Service Corp., whose franchise was revoked last year for allegedly being a nuisance to the community.

The LTFRB cancelled the firm's Certificate of Public Convenience (CPC), which it needs to operate.

For 18 years, Palanan residents have sought the transfer of the JACI garage from the 500-square-meter lot at 4537 Antheus Avenue, which is seen as a garage and repair shop.

Residents said the trucks polluted the air and the surroundings of their neighborhood.

Worse, the four-foot elite allegedly turned the streets into its own parking lot.

On May 21, the LTFRB revoked the franchise of nine of JACI's trucks.

Eli owner, Emmanuel Castillo, appealed by arguing that the LTFRB overlooked the real issues and that the agency committed a grave abuse of discretion. Theo Santos

PISTON HEAD'S BELIEF

'Fare hike delay to save GMA bid'

WITH BIT OUT
Leaders of the Metro Manila Vendors Alliance oppose plans to let the police take over the control and management of hawkers after the MMDA quit the task. See story on Page 11. Alyn Gomez

By Edwin Tundag Jr.

THE GOVERNMENT is only delaying the granting of a fare increase to help save the candidacy of President Macapagal-Arroyo, the leader of a big jeepney group has said.

Mar Garrido, president of the Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator Inalmasan (Piston), told the business last week that the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board was trying to protect the image of the President in coming months.

He noted that an increase in fare would dampen the ruling political and jeopardize the chances of Ms Macapagal, who is running for president.

"But they are forgetting the more than 300,000 drivers and our families. We are also voters," Garrido said.

Hike after polls

Garrido expressed belief that the LTFRB would only grant a hike in transport fares after the May elections.

With that, Piston would wait out the process set by LTFRB Chair Maria Elena Bautista before acting on their petition for a P1.50/km increase.

Based on Bautista's yesterday, the jeepney drivers would be asked to submit a petition paper on their demands on Thursday.

Vigor Mendoza, lawyer for some of the transport groups, said they would be ready to submit the groups' position paper by the first week of April.

The Office of the Solicitor General would then give its comment within 10 days. By the time the LTFRB decides on the issue, the elections would already be over.

MMDA to arrest trip-cutters

By Margaux Ortiz

COMPLETE your trips or face arrest.

Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando yesterday issued this warning against bus drivers who cut trips, especially on EDSA.

Fernando said many buses were not plying their entire routes and were instead turning short their trips so he able to pick up passengers in crowded areas like Cubao.

He said that aside from being a nuisance, the buses also cause heavy traffic by waiting too long for passengers in one area.

"Those bus drivers are getting used to breaking the law," Fernando said.

Fernando stressed that buses caught cutting trips will immediately be impounded without question.

He also said the erring drivers and operators would be subjected to an investigation.

Fernando noted that most of the violations were unknown buses with fake jeepneys and fake plates.

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British exec runs 15 km for Pinoy kids

By Blanche S. Rivera

THIS WAS one bet the biggest businessmen in the country and even the Central Bank governor gladly lost—and disadvantaged Filipino children won.

Warner Manning, the British chief executive officer of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank in the Philippines, ran a 15-km marathon yesterday to collect more than P600,000 for the Children's Hour and the Stepping Stone Learning, Resource and Therapy Center for special children.

Manning, 51, took off from the 129-year-old HSBC branch in Binondo at exactly 5:30 a.m. yesterday and was at the newest HSBC branch in Fort Bonifacio by 7 a.m. Special children from the Stepping Stone Center welcomed him at the finish line.

The HSBC top man ran together with 80 donors and 143 bank employees.

"A lot of people thought I could not do it.... Even my kids thought I was crazy because I'm 51!" a triumphant Manning told the bigwigs at The Fort yesterday.

Manning had committed to pay the full amount of the pledges if he could not run the 15 km to Fort Bonifacio from HSBC's first branch in the Philippines which was the Binondo branch. If he completed the marathon, however, he would have had to shell out only 10 percent of the pledges, or a maximum of P50,000.

As Manning was preparing for the marathon, the dealing room of the HSBC treasury was abuzz with bets on whether he could do it or not. When it was learned that the determined executive was practicing thrice a week, the bets shifted to how long it would take him to finish the run.

Yesterday, it was Manning who collected from donors led by Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura, Energy Secretary Vince Perez, shipping magnate Doris Magsaysay-Ho, San Miguel Corp. president Ramon Ang, SGV's Washington Sycip, Ben Z Cabel and the Ortigas clan.

HSBC had distributed "Walk with Warner" pledge cards to the business community and "cornered" Manning's friends during a golf tournament sponsored recently by the bank. The pledges, which included those from children of HSBC employees, ranged from P50 to P100,000.

This was not the first time Manning, who has been in the Philippines a little more than a year, had tied up a charitable project with a personal goal.

In January last year, HSBC launched "Watch Warner's Weight," where Manning would collect pledges if he lost at least 20 lbs in two months. He lost 23 lbs and donors had to cough up P250,000 for Children's Hour.

EASY RUNNER
HSBC CEO Warner Manning (all in white) has plenty to spare as he rounds the corner of Gil Puyat and Ayala avenues in Makati on his way to The Fort to collect on a bet for disadvantaged Filipino children.

Filipino Siamese twins successfully separated

From page A1

Saturday night at the King Abdul Aziz Medical City.

The baby sisters, born on Nov. 12, 2003, in the Philippines, were in good health and in a stable condition on Sunday, the official Saudi Press Agency reported.

"It is their only chance, and a rare one, (for) a normal life," said their mother Marina Mazo at the start of the operation, which was paid for by Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abul Aziz.

The twins were joined at the abdomen, the pelvis and the perineum.

"Each of the twins has complete sexual organs and they can live a normal life," said senior urologist Ahmad Al-Shammari.

The operation was the eighth separation surgery in Saudi Arabia, Al-Rabiah said. AFP

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, March 22, 2004
4th Week of Lent

1st Reading: Is 65:17-21
Gospel: Jn 4:43-54

When the two days were over, Jesus left for Galilee. Jesus himself said that no prophet is recognized in his own country. Yet the Galileans welcomed him when he arrived, because of all the things he had done in Jerusalem during the Festival and which they had seen. For they, too, had gone to the feast.

Jesus went back to Cana of Galilee where he had changed the water into wine. At Capernaum there was an official whose son was ill, and when he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and asked him to come and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.

Jesus said, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe!" The official said, "Sir, come down before my child dies." And Jesus replied, "Go, your son is living."

The man had faith in the word that Jesus spoke to him and went his way. He was already going down the hilly road when his servants met him with this news, "Your son has recovered!" So he asked them at what hour the child had begun to recover and they said to him, "The fever left him yesterday in the afternoon about one o'clock." And the father realized that it was the time when Jesus told him, "Your son is living." And he became a believer, he and all his family.

Jesus performed this second miraculous sign when he returned from Judea to Galilee.

Commentary

They had rejected him when he was at home, but when they saw him performing in the city they changed their attitude. At home they felt small beside him, but in the city they felt big because of him: he had put Nazareth on the map. The ego enters everywhere and leads wherever it will. It cares about nothing except its own need to feel big or to feel at least that it exists. Someone said cynically once, "Who cares what the general public thinks? Their opinion is a luxury." Not so, I'm afraid. Our opinions are not random like a luxury; they are fairly consistently the work of the ego.

Is there any hope for us? Of course! How could there be no hope for a Christian?

"Sir, come down before my child dies!" said the official. (John does not say whether this official was a Jew or a Gentile, as it is all of us.) Love made this official think and feel beyond his ego.

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Divers make final sweeps of SuperFerry wreck

By Tarra Quismundo

MORNING UP operations began yesterday inside SuperFerry 14, following three weeks of search, rescue and retrieval operations to recover as many victims as possible from the ill-fated ship.

Philippine Coast Guard Commodore Wilfredo Tamayo and PCG and Philippine Navy divers, members of Fire Protection operations, and volunteer search and recovery teams had begun checking every nook and cranny of the ship to see they had missed anything earlier.

It is not a terminal, nor of operations. It is just a shift of focus of operations," Tamayo said.

Saturday morning, the body of a lady [illegible] and 7 years old, the skeletal remains of another person, and four body parts were retrieved from the A-deck.

This was the same part of the ship that had yielded more than 80 bodies and several bags of body parts.

DNA tests

The recovery had been ramped now as a special forensics team of the National Bureau of Investigation, Tamayo said, which would identify the bodies and body parts through DNA testing.

On Saturday, 39 bodies were recovered. More than 700 people survived the sinking, according to the PCG information office.

'Beachey'

Tamayo said teams were finishing which made it easy through the vessel's stern (the aerodrome) did not affect their retrieval operations.

"No worries. Like [Secretary] Angelo [de Leon] always says, 'weather cooperate ed]," he said.

SuperFerry 14 is lying on its starboard side in Guimaras Bay off Barobo, Iloilo, to where the 18,000-ton ship was towed after it was pumped by fire to the early morning hours of Feb. 27.

The ship had been bound for Cebu and Cagayan de Oro with 899 passengers and crew.

Tamayo said the stepping up operations, the second phase in the retrieval operations, would take at least three days. But the schedule could change, he said, if more complex issues found.

The search operations had earlier seen teams sweeping through the passenger ship's least five times.

Removal

The stepping up operations would entail three more sweeps of every accessible part of the ship, including its sub-merged starboard portion, Tamayo said.

Afterward, he said, the PCG would proceed to monitor and supervise the ship's removal from the site.

Tamayo said that since the PCG had never publicly declares the ship, in essence, ideally Transport Systems Corp., had to hire a private towing company for the job.

Malayan Towage Co., in a private firm, was hired by Aboitiz to remove the debris on the ship's A-deck. Tamayo did not know, however, if the contracted company would have sown the wreck.

Prosecution

The PCG will also conduct what Tamayo called routine environmental protection operations to ensure that the oil in the ship's tanks would not spill into the waters and cause underwater marine life in the area.

As oil spill booms was placed around the ship shortly after it was towed to Barobo to avoid an oil spill, Tamayo said.

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VENDORS' CLAMOR

PNP out; LGU in

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

IF THE vendors still leave the final say, they would prefer to have the local governmental units rather than the police be entrusted with the task of clearing the streets of illegal vendors.

Many Manila leaders' defiance (MISIN) president Rudy Lardizabal yesterday told a press conference that they were rejecting the proposal of the PNP-republican Manila Development Authority for the Philippine National Police to take over the job.

The MMDA made the proposal after announcing last week that it was backing out of the anti-sidewalk vending operations in Metro Manila.

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando said the decision was made to prevent his men from "bad face to police or death inflicted by disgruntled vendors who, he claimed, were becoming more violent.

The vendors said that giving back the implementation of sidewalk clearing operations to barangays would lead to more suffering for vendors as some barangays could abuse their authority upon by collecting money.

The group also questioned why the police should takeover when vendors are not criminals.

National Capital Region Police Office Director Ricardo De Leon replied said the police were ready to take over.

Asked about fears of abuse, he said the NCRPO would not tolerate erring policemen, and vow, they could report any violations to Police Line.

Flora Sorino, who organized the MMDA, said the local governments are in a better position to address the concerns of vendors since they have the development plans and resources to complement the organized vending programs.

The group also asked the hawkers to pay for all the goods they confiscated from, and all the suffering they have caused due sidewalk vendors in the two years of sidewalk clearing operations.

The vendors also proposed to hold "vendor-free vending days," where the vendors are willing to pay for official permits, like the one being implemented in some crowded Quezon City.

On March 27, the group will stage a "vendors' assembly" where they would ask concerned candidates to sign covenant with the vendors.

MMDA lends support to 'anti-kotong' drive

By Marjoe Ortiz

AFTER going up to sidewalk clearing operations, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority is refocusing its energies on imposing corruption in the streets.

MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando yesterday said he is in partnership with the Department of Interior and Local Government and the Department of Transportation and Communication, the agency will deploy Globe Bishop teams all over Metro Manila to keep an eye on corrupt policemen and traffic enforcers.

Fernando said he is confident the program is viable that the cooperative teams made up of professional law enforcers will be able to accomplish what the SWAT-DA clearing operations were achieved in the past two years.

"By essentially eradicating kotong activities, illegal violators would come to exist from the streets because this project will do away with those assorted perverters," Fernando said.

The MMDA chair also stressed that they decided to hand over the anti-sidewalk vending operations because the illegal hawkers were getting violent.

Fernando said the upcoming elections might have something to do with the vendors' renewed interest.

MetroBriefs

One in nine

CAMALIG policeman yesterday was arrested in connection with the robbery last week committed upon one of the suspects who may be caught responsible for the shooting. Police Senior Superintendent Rodolfo Tacconsolo, an acting director, also told reporters that Rolando Ortiz, 39, was arrested by police operatives on March 20. SPO3 Romeo de Gomez Distaban, targeting said the robbery only four months. He, another suspect, Arnel Jeff Fabico, faced the property in Tondo. They have robbed the bags of passengers, and abused one of them as a suspect and one of the passengers. The victim, Andrew Bonifacio, died minutes after he was pronounced dead. Both faces charges of robbery with homicide filed against him.

Lalu Edmonte

Scavenger affair

IF THEY scavenge on various scavenger for drivers' one calamity site in Tondo, Manila. But aren't you financed. Rather, police tagged this a crime objective, one Rolando Quintanilla alleged was a homicide. Rolando Quintanilla, 26, of Temporary Housing, Road, Tondo, allegedly killed his neighbor, Bernardo Flores, 20, on Saturday. Estimated account because severely distending his wife. He told police that Flores, who was then drinking, tried to publicly offer when they quarreled by him at around 1 a.m. Sunday. Flores was pronounced dead on arrival at the hospital. Quintanilla then fled. Police said that he was arrested in a bike nearby and validated Flores on the street. He was rushed to a hospital but died not long after. Quintanilla had surrendered to the police after that day.

Lalu Edmonte

Seafarers' forum set

A FORUM that discusses issues and problems that affect seafarers and how to overcome the fight against illegal recruitment activities will be held on March 24, 7 a.m. p.m. at the Pagoda Ballroom, Pasay city. Hotel Interior Complex Payat II, Roxas, Manila. Titled "Joint Problems in Seafarers Employment Overseas Workers," the forum will touch on the following topics: present-day employment opportunities and requirements; the overseas employment certificate; and responsibilities that contribute to maritime disasters like the recent Superferry 14 tragedy. For details, call the International Seafarers Action Center (ISAC), at 302-7411, or email info@isac.org.ph.

Women's Month

THE CITY of Las Piñas, through the efforts of Hon. Mayor and Rep. Cynthia Villar and the city's Women's Development Foundation (WDF), will celebrate the Month of Women's Month through a free medical mission at the Las Piñas Integrated District Hospital. Women born the city and other nearby cities flocked the hospital for other eye center and breast examination.

Tamara, 3, needs your help

HELP US your chance to help someone.

The parents of Tamara Dawn Valdez, 3, are appealing to good Samaritans and donors to help their child cope with leukemia.

Tam, as she is fondly called, was diagnosed last November to be suffering from the disease.

Tam is currently on her third session of chemotherapy. She now realizes, second leg to her mother, Jeffrey G. Valdez.

Tam's thick hair has begun to fall and she's more prone to infections than ever, says Valdez-Gonzal.

The treatment sessions have been costing Tam's family so much. They need donors to help them get Tam's treatment sessions.

Valdez-Gonzal also suggested that Tam be operated on and injected with a procedure known to allow stem cells for infusion of drugs, blood cells and tissues of blood transplants.

Donors may call the family at 374-3417 and/or cell phone numbers 0917-4234107 or 0918-5234107. Or send the donation to Tam Jones at #5, Liber St., Bonto Biscocho, Quezon City.

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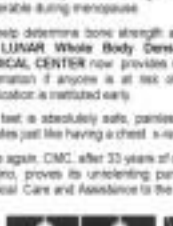

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Transport strike to push through in Pampanga

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—Public transport groups belonging to the Pinagkaisang Samahan ng Tsuper at Op- ...ators Nationwide (Piston) in Pampanga will push through with their planned province-wide strike today.

More than 50 jeepney operators, 30 circle interlink and at least three associations of minibus drivers and operators in the province will join the strike, said Welly Suarez, Pistons spokesperson, in Pampanga.

But an official of the Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator ng Pilipinas Group Consolidation assured commuters in the region that jeepneys and buses would continue to ply their regular routes today despite calls from other transport groups to stage a nationwide strike.

Tom Talavera, spokesperson of Stop and the Stakeholders ng mga Progressibong Tsuper at Operator (Stratpro) in Central Luzon, said members of the Stop alliance had yet to plan their next move after the LandTransportation Franchising and Regulatory Board meeting on March 16 that could be a 48-hour nationwide strike.

Stop Talavera said has more than 800,000 jeepney, tricycle and bus drivers as members nationwide.

He said the LTFRB has scheduled a hearing with Stop leaders on March 23 to discuss their demands for a P1.50 fare hike and the scrapping of the oil deregulation law.

Although the Stop alliance was disappointed with the suspension of any action on the fare hike petition, Talavera said the plan to paralyze transportation services should come from the council of different transport groups.

"The move to stage a nationwide transport strike should be decided by the whole transport sector. We will wait until Tuesday before we finally act on the issue," Talavera told the barkada.

He said that based on their estimates, fuel prices had risen by almost P5.50 per liter since February 2002. In exchange, he said, the drivers' earnings had dropped to an all-time low of P76-P100 per day this year.

On March 1, Stop and other transport groups led a nationwide strike that paralyzed public transport in Metro Manila and in other key cities in the country. —Tonette Orejas and Allan Macatuno, PhD Central Luzon Desk

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Malaysian peace talks observers arrive today

By Jovanie Aning

AN ADVANCE group belonging to the International Monitoring Team (IMT) from Malaysia will arrive today in the groundwork for next month's scheduled peace talks between the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

Acting Foreign Affairs Secretary Louis Beads said last week the IMT main survey team would provide the deployment of the Malaysian-led IMT which would oversee the truce between the government and the MILF ahead of the peace talks.

Malaysian Ambassador to the Philippines Mohammad Nadhi told reporters yesterday the team would "look into the logistics, the situation in camps and operation areas, and make assessment of security on the ground for the eventual deployment of the IMT."

Nadhi said only 10 to 12 members of the advance party would actually be flying into Manila, with the rest of the members coming from Malaysian Embassy staff.

The IMT's arrival, originally set for March 14, had been postponed because of the national elections in Malaysia yesterday.

Deployment of the advance team was one of the agreements reached during the fifth exploratory talks between the Philippine government and the MILF held in Kuala Lumpur on Feb. 19 and 20.

Tomorrow, the advance team will call on Bacolod mayor but Special Concerns Nabil Tegpa and Presidential Adviser on the Moro Process Yusuda Quitevis-Dolos. They will also hold a press briefing.

V. Velasquez; 46

VELASQUEZ, Adoracion (Sec) on March 17 at the age of 46. She is survived by her wife Rhoann and children Pamela, Monica, Victoria and Erika. Interment will be today at the Holy Cross Memorial Park in Sucat. Relatives after the 10 a.m. Mass.

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Cebu prelate seeks house arrest for Erap

By Bernadette A. Parco
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Cardinal Vidal yesterday made a plea for former President Joseph Estrada to be placed under house arrest "in the spirit of reconciliation in this season of Lent."

Vidal, in a one-page statement issued last night, said he was making the request because the "businessmen, the religious and political sectors in Cebu" had asked him to make the appeal "with the hope of promoting peace and reconciliation in the country, especially among warring political leaders."

"At this point, when many are calling for charity and compassion in the government's treatment of the former President as he awaits his trial, I would like to point out the necessity of expressing our Christian values in the humane, fair and just treatment of someone who has not yet been proven guilty by a court of law," the prelate said.

This was the second appeal that Vidal had made to the government on the issue of placing Estrada under house arrest. He made a similar call in December 2002, as a "Christmas gift to the former President."

At that time, the Cardinal said he had not been pressured by the Estrada camp into making the appeal. He had said that he was making the call because the Cebu Presbyteral Council had decided to join the clamor to have Estrada placed under house arrest.

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The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Greco

Turmoil erupts in Taiwan over close election

TAIPEI—Taiwan's High Court ordered ballot boxes to be sealed Sunday after the opposition disputed President Chen Shui-bian's election victory because of a mystery assassination attempt and spoiled ballots.

Protests erupted across the island after Chen's victory by less than 30,000 votes over challenger Lien Chan in four exit polls, which took place just hours after the president was shot and lightly injured.

Kuomintang (KMT) leader Lien rejected the result and demanded a recount, saying too many questions remained unanswered over Friday's assassination attempt and the existence of a large quantity of spoiled ballot papers.

Thousands of angry KMT supporters lined exit polls and outer cameras across barbed wire outside the presidential palace Sunday as judges prepared to decide whether to order a recount.

Taiwan's premier denounced violence by some KMT supporters but backed the opposition's right to question the vote after the seven-day election in the closest democratic history of the island off southern China.

"We should not allow [it] for the judiciary to make a fair and just ruling," Yu Shyi-kun told reporters.

The statement followed hours of turmoil after a visibly angry Lien, the losing KMT candidate, demanded answers to questions about the assassination attempt on Chen and Vice President Annette Lu on Friday.

Authorities said Chen, 53, and Lu, 55, suffered superficial bullet wounds after a mystery attacker fired at least two shots as they traveled by an open-top jeep during campaigning in the southern city of Tainan.

Doctors Sunday released pictures of Chen undergoing surgery for the wounds, which showed that police officers had to remove the bullets from the president's abdomen. Analysts said Taiwan's Chen's support.

Party polls showed the KMT leading by 7 to 8 percent before the shooting, according to Gilles Guiheux, director of the Hong Kong branch of the French Institute for Research on Contemporary China.

Demonstrations clashed with police in Taichung in central Taiwan while in Taipei, the KMT leadership rallied its supporters to join a march from the presidential building to parliament.

A Taiwan High Court official said a panel of judges would decide if there was enough evidence to hold a partial or total recount, with reports A decision may be made on Monday, according to a source talking party's legislature.

In Saturday's election, more than 317,000 votes were declared invalid by the Central Election Commission compared with 128,000-120,000 in the island's previous two elections. AFP

DEMONSTRATOR Samar Mwanang from Zimbabwe climbs up the clock face on London's landmark Big Ben clock tower at Parliament Square, March 20. Thousands of anti-war protesters marked the start of the war in the Middle East with events across London on Saturday ahead of a demonstration to mark the first anniversary of war in Iraq. AFP

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Mystery shrouds shooting

TAIPEI—Mystery surrounded an attempt to kill Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian hours before his reelection bid. Reporters had no extra-time victory or a huge pile of unsolved bullets and unsolved lies with razor-margin 0.9 lead.

"We have not been close explanation of the lack of [your] shooting," said opponent Lien Chan.

His impact on the election needs more words and its impact over client. The double-surrounding it give no one common impression—this is an unfair election."

The Kuomintang News (E) Bureau ruled out a political motive or Chinese involvement. But no one has yet been assisted and many in Taiwan, viewed suspicion about the unprecedented attack.

Some suspect underground gambling rings, which have huge vocalized at stakes on how the election. Others do blame with the China, which views Taiwan as part of its territory and defends China for pushing the island toward independence.

Doubt shrouds how the dead Nationalists to assassination.

Another says it was an inside job by supporters of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) to gain last-minute support.

All may prove to be fueled by fevered imaginations—and perhaps those must have been water-source.

But one thing was clear: as a result, a huge group of Independence-minded Taiwan voters got no chance to vote.

After the attack, Chen extended the no-fly zone over the opposition, meaning 200,000 soldiers and police—traditionally Nationalist supporters—were too busy to vote, said Daniel Hwang, a spokesperson for Lien's running mate, James Soong. Reuters

Worldwide protests slam Iraq occupation

NEW YORK—More than a million anti-war protesters poured into the streets of cities around the globe on Saturday's anniversary of the invasion of Iraq to demand the withdrawal of US forces.

From Sydney to Tokyo, from Santiago, Chile, to Madrid, London, New York and San Francisco, demonstrators condemned US policy in Iraq and said their dislike for President George W. Bush was not limited to the United States.

In London, two anti-war protesters evaded security to climb the landmark Big Ben clock tower in the Houses of Parliament, unfurling a banner reading "Time for Truth."

About 20,000 demonstrators gathered in central London, many carrying "blasted" posters bearing images of President George W. Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair, his main war ally.

In most places, the demonstrations were modest in the size of thousands, compared with hundreds of thousands who marched in big cities on Feb. 15, 2003, to try and prevent the conflict.

The protests' powers began in Asia and moved to Europe and the Americas in what organizers billed "a global day of action."

In New York, scene of the Sept. 11, 2001, hijacked plane strikes by Islamic militants, tens of thousands extended chant to mayor Michael Bloomberg, many of them to ditching Bush, who is running for reelection in November.

Among the signs spotted in the crowd were "Money For Jobs and Education not for War and Occupation" and "Bush Lies" and "End Occupation of Iraq."

In San Francisco, a diverse group of protesters gathered for a massive rally in front of City Hall, others dumping Bush in November runs after this event in Boston.

"Are we ready to [sing Bush]?" local politico Tom interviews asked the crowd. "Are we ready to impeach Bush?" The crowd responded with an enthusiastic "yes" in both quarters.

Actor Woody Harrelson told the rally "to about uniting everyone. ... We must prepare."

In Crawford, Texas, about 400 anti-war activists gathered at a park near President Bush's ranch. The Texas town's choice was "Crawford, Texas. Bring your village idiot home."

And in an activists gathered in Bentonville, North Carolina, home of Fort Bragg, one of the biggest US military bases. Soldiers, veterans and local residents staged low-volume demonstrations, but there were military veterans and families among the anti-war groups. Reuters

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Pakistan doubts Al-Zawahri among surrounded militants

WANA, Pakistan—Pakistan's army has scoured over 100 suspected redoubts after five days of intense fire near the Afghan border but said it was unlikely Al Qaida number two Ayman al-Zawahri was among those still surrounded.

Instead a senior commander said the "high value target" whose capture or killing was thought to be protecting was probably an Uzbek or Chechen militant leader.

Pakistani forces began to flush out foreign militants and local tribal allies on Saturday from their heavily fortified stone-walled compounds in the country's tribal west, after calming fire over their bitterly contested ridges.

But the army continues to fear the militant resistance it has encountered since launching operations last year in the border tribal areas in an attempt to find Al Qaida leader Osama bin Laden and his supporters.

Uzbek militants and the Islamic defence organised rebels were trying to pioneer a "high value target," with official link initially speculating it might have been Zawahri.

But intercepted rebel radio communications suggested the mystery militant was Uzbek or Chechen. Zawahri is Egyptian.

"All the intercepts we have been receiving have been in the Chechen or Uzbek language," Lt. Gen. Safdar Hussain told reporters in the western town of Wana, near the fighting.

Zawahri, a doctor, is regarded as the brains of al-Qaeda and a key figure behind the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

An intelligence source said two Chechen militants, named as Dampo and Qassim dai, were believed to be in the area and prominent Uzbek militant, Tahir Yuldashev, may be with them.

The offensive, involving several thousand soldiers, is the biggest Pakistan has mustered since it joined the US-led war on terror after the Sept. 11 attacks.

Dozens of fighters have been killed and about 100 suspected militants, many of them foreigners, captured, the army said.

"They are extremely professional fighters. They wait for our troops in many within five to seven meters and then open fire," said Hussain, the top military commander in the region.

"They are taking us from every direction wherever our troops have moved it's not as we are knowing it's the hands are with us," he said. "With an undefined target like this, it is constantly chasing shadows." Reporters saw six army truck convoys, 30 or 40 personnel, bloodied and with wounds tied behind their backs.

Most were bearded and wearing traditional Pakistani long shirt and baggy trousers. Some were Muslim prayer caps, others the brown woollen hats common in the mountains.

Hussain said the militants were clinging to long-established ranges in the rebel South Waziristan tribal area, with no extensive network of trenches and bunkers or underground.

Pakistan forces first went in on Tuesday but ran into a hail of fire and had to retreat in disarray, losing 30 men, dead or flesh and.

Since then they have stormed 1,500 troops in a 60-km cordon around the area, with a similar number fighting and rescuing losses inside the zone.

Up to 13 civilians died on Saturday when their vehicles were fired on, but it was unclear by whom. A senior security official said militants had fortified the whole to encircle the army cordon but two local officials said according to locals had fired.

Hussain said the battle would soon be over.

About a dozen have been have been getting Internet France technical assistance to intelligence gathering but no US ground troops have been involved, the military said. Reuters

WORLD BRIEFS

Kosovo crisis

PRIST Rat, Serbia and Montenegro—Albanian provocations over the future of Kosovo must share the blame for escalations of violence in the UN protectorate, according to the last senior adviser to the Belgrade. By withdrawal from the west of independence, while talking to withdraw unlawfully and flee side of this. The United Nations and Nato allies of the west for a while but again. At this week by Albanian extremists as it was by Serbs in 1999, they said. Reconstructed have resulted to the latest horror since the UN and Nato took it over from Serbian in 1999 after a bombing campaign to stop Serbian oppression of the ethnic Albanian majority. Reuters

Queen Juliana, 94

AMSTERDAM—Queen Juliana, dubbed the "people's queen" after she helped her Netherlands escape from the Nazis in the 1940s and oversaw the independence of the last remaining colonies, died on Saturday at the age of 94. The reigning monarch, who abdicated in 1980, from health complications, stepping of her royal apartments and needing her children to make a speech. She died in a long infirmity of 94 NOV 18, 2004 the Queen Juliana Dutch royal whole she lived most of her life. Reuters

8 simul transplants

MIAMI—Doctors at the University of Miami have performed a record-breaking eight simultaneous organ transplants on an 8-year-old girl, operating with nine transplant teams from the hospital announced Monday. Dr Martin, received the liver, stomach, pancreas, small intestine, large intestine, spleen and two kidneys from another in fundraising a 12-hour procedure Jan. 21 at the university's Jackson Memorial Medical Center. Most of the procedure was withdrawn. Miami had transmitter period of greatest risk of another time. Reuters had said last week of. Arrest was born July 1 with congenital intestinal disorder, which prevents the stomach, intestines and kidneys of contracting normally. AFP

Malaysia votes

KUALA LUMPUR—Malaysia's weekend multiparties ruling coalition headed to almost certain victory in elections Sunday but Islamic leader ousted deputy Anwar Ibrahim might be the other hot favourite. Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's likely poll expert to win big comfortably, but there's a strong interest this time in whether the country can stifle foreign investors. Abdullah, himself an Islamic scholar, campaigned that his government's hardline on the issue, despite its own critics away from the fundamentalist opposition to attract the votes "middle ground progressive" Islamic vote. AFP

Probe of UN in Iraq

BAGHDAD—US Secretary of State Colin Powell said on Saturday he was strongly convinced" about indications of corruption in the administration programme run by the UN and said US Secretary General Kofi Annan's top aide to probe. Executive Director Benon Sevan from investigation as well as French and Russian officials in the programme, which allowed Iraq to sell oil to buy food and medicine for Iraq during the UN sanctions. It was shut down last year after the US-led invasion of Iraq that toppled Saddam. Reuters

2 GIs killed in Iraq

BAGHDAD—A rocket attack near the Euphrates town of Fallujah, west of Baghdad killed two US soldiers and wounded seven, the US military said on Sunday. Maj. Gen. Mark Kimmitt, deputy director of operations for the US army in Iraq said three soldiers died in the attack on Saturday and seven were wounded. Reuters

MONDAY, MARCH 22, 1999 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

SPORTS

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Lascuña fires 68, rules TCC by 2

By Herong Cataliu, Contributor

CAYLABANG, Laguna—Playing with a busted driver and amused with the attacker that only champions have, Antonio Lascuña yesterday clawed back from two strokes down in the final nine holes to rule The Country Club Invitational by two strokes over a game Angelo Que.

The 33-year-old Visayan-born pounded down the last nine holes using home for a final 2-under par 68 and won P1.1 million with a 270 total, four under par through The Country Club layout.

LASCUÑA

The shocks, even stunning Lascuña considered the biggest victory of his career despite 1 bogey on the 17th at Que, who charged out to a four-stroke lead at the midpoint of the...4 9th...failed to keep in step when it mattered most.

Cooky LAO, the only other player in the small, select field to contend for the championship, finished with a 71 after a birdie-birdie start and was tied at 281.

Que won P800,000, while LAO pulled in P450,000 from the P4.64-million pot.

"I just kept thinking that I have the game that can take this tournament," said the thirtysomething Cebuano lad who is Filipino. "I was never rattled, even after falling out of the lead. You can't afford to think negatively if you intend to strike."

Que, a two-year pro who set a course record on the par 70-sheltered course in the third round, grabbed the lead by two strokes at the turn with a 2-under 33 as Lascuña bogeyed the seventh and eighth to a 36.

But Que, who also had the lead for several outs Hoops Magnolia has had very mapped up his game with precision iron play on the back nine, rotating home birdies on the 12th, 13th, 14th and 16th to secure the lead for good.

A 10-foot birdie set up by a 5 iron on the 231-yard par-3 11th ignited Lascuña's sizzling finish. He pitched to four feet on No. 12, tied 3 "gimme" bird on No. 14 and knocked in a 15-footer on No. 16 to go three up on Que.

With his game level making an threatening move, Lascuña bogeyed the 17th from one step to open the win for his third two-victory season.

Que's downfall started on the 18th when he took a bogey going from rough to trap. He was still in contention until he fanned a 4-iron foot tiddle put on the No. 14 tee and bogeyed.

LAO, who started with three consecutive 70s, birdied Nos. 3 and 5 to tie Que for second place at 2-under.

But the tally was short-lived. He three-putted from the fringe of the par-5 third and then missed the green from just about 40 yards on No. 4 to drop back to even.

It was Lascuña One-Duel from there.

Que, who had tied Lascuña with a birdie on No. 4, wrested sole leadership three holes later when Lascuña missed the fairway and the green from a bogey.

Lascuña then found himself down by two when his own home-bar par slammed out.

Marciano Pacay and veteran Danny Lucas tied for fourth at 286 after a 71 and a 73. Both went home with P147,500.

Ronnie Bayron (70) was sixth with a 289 total, while Ruben Bautista rallied with a 69 and Nicolas Fernando at 290. Elmer Salandre (73), Magaldi (71), Jose Cruz (75) and Eddie Rogers (75) finished tied for eighth with 291 totals.

The final scores:

270—A.Lascuña 71-67-70-66, 270—A.Que 70-67-66-69, 281—C.Lao 70-71-70-70, 286—M.Pacay 74-72-69-71, D.Lucas 73-72-73-71, 289—R.Bautista 70-75-72-72, 290—N.Fernando 75-74-72-69, 291—E. Salandre 72-70-69-70, E. Magaldi 71-74-75-71, D. Cruz 75-75-71-70, 292—R.D'Rose 76-74-74-72, R. Pagarigan 75-73-73-71, 294—E. Cabugao 75-77-72-70, 295—Ike Bautista 77-73-79-75, J. Odulairo 71-75-74-75, R. Cuello 77-79-77-72, M.Diamonden (a) 78-77-77-73.

Alaska downs Talk 'N Text /A13

3 RP boxers 'knocked out' by computer

CLEARFIELD—A pall of gloom descended on the AP division Pk Boxing Team Saturday night as three of its unranked pugs lost their first round matches to the second Asian qualifying tournament for the Atlanta Olympics.

Light flyweight Rhoy Tabuzo was the first to go as South Korean Go Seung Back knocked out

Siot humbled but unbowed by poor start

[illegible] PAGEFT and that time yet to show [illegible]

And Barangay Ginebra King mentor Robert "Jet" Tanquincen had no spoken admitting his shortcomings in his debut for the league's most popular trad- club on 100-96 loss to Red Bull Barako Saturday.

"Siguro dito ko [illegible] gusto ituro [players] nung[illegible] as the things that we should or could have done," he said following a post-game interview. "A big part of the small is my inability to prepare them properly," he added.

It could have also been a perfect opportunity for the Kings to finally break its losing spell at the Smart Centre, Gamboa has lost all of its past five games to Antipolo-based crossing its last win on Oct. 28, 2000 against the Lions.

The Kings struggled trying to keep up with Red Bull's tough offense. After the first half, Gamboa could produce nothing in the 3-point area compared to Red Bull's 10-3 percent. Red Bull even went to lead by 15 points early in the third period.

Tanquincen still was proud of his team's never-say-die display. "They gave all their effort.

You can't ask anything more from them," he said. He pointed to his decision of the players as "receptive" as he is making adjustments as was timed.

Plus, he is also open to consulting with the team's former coach Allan Caidic. "He's a big help to me," he said.

During the break coach's words of wit at all sides in Tanquincen. He served as an instructional coach of the late Miguel Beermen in the 2002 Commissioner's and Governor's Cup while Jong Uichico was tapped to coach the 98' team in the Smart Asian Games. Jun Magsipoc played third and fourth players, respectively.

"Hopefully I could bring back the running game of the team but in the same time keep the discipline and make it a way defending team as well," Tanquincen said.

Pacquiao begins 'hellish' training

THE AVENGERS is a complete [illegible] from the heroic schools in left behind other [illegible] movie and entertainment shocks, party [illegible] pool hall visits, and silent teasing.

Active after serving in the United States from an exhaustive stay from the Philippines where he almost missed his [illegible] but Friday evening, featherweight king Manny Pacquiao did not waste time and proceeded immediately to [illegible] Freddie Roach in Wild Card Gym in Los Angeles.

PACQUIAO

Pacquiao was unanimous to succeed at Roach's world-famous gym, and then started his rigorous training under the [illegible] of the four-rounder on Saturday.

Under Roach, Pacquiao [illegible] a hellish four-week training camp that will prepare the Filipino Sensation king for his July 4 duel with the WBA 'IB' king Juan Manuel Marquez at the HBO Grand Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas.

Pacquiao left the country last Friday evening on board a PAL flight that took him and his entourage—which included promoter Ahmad Muhammad and an HBO crew—to Los Angeles.

HBO will air the Pacquiao-Marquez showdown, including the chief undercard bouts between prospect Miguel Cotto and then "Pride" Valdez.

The five-week training regimen would include sparring sessions against top WBA Card Juan Lucas Bat [illegible] Gonzalez, Bernard Dunne and possibly against superbantamweight titlist "Magnifico" Poland, order to dished by [illegible] Pacquiao's second duel in 120 in the opposite Waterworks, but Jun Velbuena on March 25 Sacramento, Lagunday.

Aces' tough D smothers Phone Pals

YOUNG grabs possession over a fallen Phili[illegible]

[illegible]

By Jane Navarro

ALAMO showed an outstanding defense at Ramil Hofkowski and the Tanduay and the Aces humbled the Talk 'N Text Phone Pals, 80-72, last night in the Great Metrobar Pilot Fiesta Conference at the Araneta Coliseum.

Teammate: Who would have thought we could beat Talk 'N Text in that margin? I guess we just played very well and they had an off night," said Alaska coach Tim Cone.

It was largely a team effort as five Aces led by the peppery Mike Cortes finished in double figures while they limited top Tanduay and Hidcote in the paint to no end.

Hidcote came up with 20 points and 21 rebounds but converted only 12 of 24 attempts from the field.

Hounded by Ali Rod throughout, Tanduay had limited touches on the ball and made only six of 21 shots for 14 points, a figure way below his 24.8-point average in the games.

Conse, however, downplayed the Ace's solid, all-around performance.

"We played an outstanding defense and they missed a lot of passes," said Cone.

The Aces stretched to their fourth straight win for a 5-1 record while falling to the Phone Pals' three-second defeat in six outings.

Jun Magsipoc then stretched its unbeaten run to six with a 98-88 decision over Purefoods in the second game.

Phil Time

ALAMO 80— Cortes 20, Reid 14, Asaraj 8, Alma 13, Abarrientos 5, Hayes 5, Bulanadi 2, Ildefonso 0, Ramos 0, Ilustre 0, Ramos 0, Ilustre 0, Ramos 0, Ilustre

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Acsa all over again

IF we had any doubt that the criminal charge the National Bureau of Investigation filed earlier this month against former dependence official Ernesto Hamsen was a grievous mistake, the NBI's official explanation cleared it for us.

The other week, lawyer Jose Justo Tap, chief of the agency's anti-graft division, dismissed any and all objections to the filing. "We have a strong case. We would not recommend the filing of charges against Hamsen and his staff if we do not believe they are liable [for] the scam," Tap said. He then urged Hamsen to raise his defense before the Ombudsman if he truly believed he wasn't guilty.

EDITORIAL

We've heard this before, haven't we? The same supercilious tone, the same arrogant attitude, the same excuse to endure a tedious script.

In August 2002, the NBI inadvertently presented Lodi Bank cashier Acsa Fuentinez, the whistleblower in a P300-million tax diversion scheme, as a suspect in the same scam. Despite evidence stating from it the face, the NBI—once routinely referred to as the country's elite law enforcement agency—refused to own up to its mistake. It took the NBI well over a year to drop the case against Fuentinez and tender its apologies.

The NBI's absolutist position on the Hamsen affair may be rooted in institutional shortcomings. (An organization that prides itself on being above the norm is often led by its corporate self-image to think it can do no wrong.) But the agency's claim the respondent approach fits nicely in to the pattern that, on and off over the last decade, has come to characterize the government's handling of the tax-credit scam.

All told, the scam may be responsible for defrauding the government of some P26 billion in taxes, but the fate of the government case in the "grandmother of all scams" has been a heritage in circumstance.

To cite only three instances:

In January 2002, Rep. Oscie Moreno accused Antonio Periferio, the Ombudsman at the time, of filing a contrived fraud case against tax credit scam suspects that was "destined for dismissal by design."

The legal maneuver, which the lawyers dubbed "outbreakers," involved filing a deliberately weak case—taking a dive, in a word. (Periferio vehemently denied the accusations, and eventually escaped impeachment by the House.)

The principles behind the same maneuver were seen at work again only last February, when Today newspaper exposed the machinations against principal witnesses Pedro Dalagdag and his wife Gloria Avila, the exit urged for either of Pearse Gozo Dalagdag, the alleged mastermind behind the tax credit scam, to pull himself out of the loop; the wife Bonita hired a cruder line: she was charged as one of the co-accused.

And now Hamsen.

The executive director of the One Stop Shop Tax Credit and Duty Drawback Center (OSS) of the Department of Finance, Hamsen was—to—both a key figure in the discovery of the scam and a leading light in the government's prosecution of the case.

In recent months last past, for instance, Hamsen helped the NBI file three key arrests and stop a new wave of tax credit fraud (valued at some P200 million). And in May last year, he and his staff discovered that Robin Electronics had sold P24 million in fake tax credit certificates to two other companies.

"The OSS was at the forefront of two successful entrapment operations which led to the arrest of five individuals involved in this multimillion-peso scam. It was likewise instrumental in obtaining bank documents to establish where the proceeds of this criminal activity went," Hamsen said.

So it came as a surprise, to put it mildly, when the NBI included the whistleblower in the charge sheet.

"We were the ones who discovered and exposed the [latest] scam. If we were party to it, we could just have kept quiet," he said.

The lawyers advising Task Force 156, the inter-agency group tasked to investigate tax credit anomalies, recommended that the accusation against Hamsen and his staff for negligence and gross misconduct be thrown into the waste basket. The NBI decided to file the charges anyway.

It does not take a seasoned investigator to know that, since the scam was first exposed in 1999, many attempts have been made to stop the government case, or weaken it. How the NBI could have missed this pattern, or how it has come to play an inadvertent role in it, is a mystery.

Human rights violations by the BID

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

DO you know why Filipinos are being treated unfairly by other countries? Because we don't treat foreigners here fairly. There are many foreigners now languishing for years and months in detention centers of our Bureau of Immigration and Deportation (BID) without any conviction for any crime or any final order of deportation.

The BID detention centers are crowded primarily for foreigners with final orders of deportation after being convicted in courts for criminal offense. But many of these foreigners are detained there on the mere moment of a "summon order" by the Commissioner of Immigration based only on an accusation of a private person. Some of them have been confined there for so long without any hearing on their cases that they already want to be deported to their home countries but the BID refuses to deport them and continues to detain them. This is unconstitutional.

The Supreme Court has repeatedly declared in case after case that without a final order of deportation, the immigration commissioner has no power to issue a warrant of arrest against an alien. Such an act violates the due process clause of the Constitution. And it has long been settled that the "shall and may" rules and the "search and seizure clause" apply to an alien legally admitted into the country.

In *Santos v. Commissioner of Immigration* (74 SCRA 96), the Supreme Court said: "No alien may now be arrested before a final order of deportation is made and before the charges have been substantiated."

In *Salazar v. Achacoso* (GR 81510, March 14, 1990), the Court on banc spelled out these vital guidelines:

"1. Under article II, Section 2, of the 1987 Constitution, it is only the judges, and no one else, may issue warrants of arrest and search.

"2. The exception to the rule of deportation of undesirable aliens, effects the President or the Commissioner of Immigration may order arrested, following a final order of deportation, for the purpose of deportation."

In *Gan Sukon v. Hon. Ida to Reyes* (GR 106322-23, 93-12-15, May 31, 1993), the Court, also en banc, reiterated that "A warrant of arrest issued by the Commissioner of Immigration, in the valid exercise for the sole purpose of executing a final order of deportation. A warrant of arrest issued by the Commissioner of Immigration for purposes of investigation only is null and void for being unconstitutional."

In *Nieto v. Vitug* (20 SCRS 701, 1968) the court, also en banc, declared:

"So in case after case, foreigners are detained indefinitely in BID detention centers on the sheer say-so of the immigration commissioner without any final order of deportation, without any hearing even, without knowing when their cases will end, despite orders from the courts to release them.

Just one example is that of our engineer Alfred Lehnert, a German who was married to a Filipina with a 7-year-old daughter. He has been legally living here for the last 25 years. Lehnert went to see from his detention cell in Bicutan to ask for help from his fiancée in-law, Sen. Pia Cayetano, who was elected to the BID office in Mandaluyong. As fellow engineer relative to his visa, he was suddenly arrested and detained by two BID "intelligence agents." Basis for his arrest was a "summon order" not a warrant of arrest, signed by then Commissioner Andrew D. Domingo, directing the agents to "conduct verification/validation of the immigration status and activities of said foreign national and effect the immediate arrest if records have accused the Philippine Immigration Act of 1940, as amended." Lehnert has been in detention for 17 months now. Starting all this time, there has not been any hearing of his case by the BID nor any justification for his continued detention. He claims there was no attempt to contact anyone from him and when he refused to pay, a "fabricated" letter, complaining his relatives are not to be fed with the food sent to him by them and deport him. The complaints against were believed.

On Dec. 18, 2002, the Regional Trial Court of Mandaue City granted the petition for habeas corpus filed by Lehnert and ordered his immediate release. The BID appealed to the Court of Appeals which dismissed the appeal. It filed a petition for review which is also pending in the court.

Even if the case is pending in the Supreme Court, the international document is that the detention should be released and the pending appeal. But the BID refuses to grant Lehnert bail.

What is the BID afraid of? The person who filed the complaint against Lehnert must be very influential. But who doesn't he prove his accusations instead of hiding? Shouldn't the Commission on Human Rights be interested in protecting the rights of an alien? Why doesn't it complain to the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs? What is the Commission on Human Rights doing? And since the immigration commissioner is a presidential appointee, what is President Macapagal-Arroyo going to do about it?

Think about it. How will we feel if the same injustice is done to a Filipino in Germany?

Unique situation

THERE'S THE RUB

Gregorio de Guzman

SOLVABLE. Manufacturing dissension is. That is the position filed by Bayan Muna Rep. and denies Raoul Bernardo asking the Supreme Court to declare Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as having validly elected to complete and pursuing the Vice President in charge of the executive government.

"We know we have a unique situation where we have a President who is a candidate for the first time," says Lagman. "That is something we have to adjust to. We believe the petition is constitutional."

Of course, the fact that the petition comes from a candidate—of the opposition makes it politically more sensitive. Who cares? The petition is not going to call the bench-ch, even if the device attention to its true color. The petition has merit and I hope does—and others—perceive it thoroughly.

Beyond to-ght, we have a unique situation. We have a President who is a candidate for the first time in the post-Edsa period. And he is right. We have no precedent time to adjust to the situation. But why should this unique situation mean that GMA may be allowed to be both candidate and President at the same time? Why should adjusting to the situation mean allowing her to exploit the public resource to run in power? Bunye's petition is right, he contention is wrong. If the unique situation demands something, it is the opposite.

The unique situation is that GMA was elected to power without having been elected President. The unique situation is that she became leader without having led, or even taken meaningful part in, the campaign to elect to executive regime. The time situation is that she was sworn in as President because the country had previous forty-three—except the technical one of "Resign All," the constitutional provision before "unique situation" to be headed by Hilario Davide—she was sworn in by.

If that unique situation demands anything, it is that the current occupant of Malacañang must shun any of her predecessors most least herself to the lines of the land. It is that the underlying beneficiary of the people's blood, sweat and tears must bow to the will of the people as embodied in the Constitution.

The logic for asking GMA to go on leave as President comes straight from the Constitution. The sole restrictions who argued—unsolicited—is that a non-incumbent might use of or power while on leave. In legal terms, it promotes an incumbent from using public resources to campaign for reelection. The restriction aren't just momentary, though—the clause attaches the argument. The President, in contrast, is not a candidate. He is not legally holding, even if it is election-related, such as seal of a lawsuit opposition sorties on grounds of security. The President to big boy—or his any department secretary or a member of his staff who does not enjoy his orders, even if they are election-related, to help out in his campaign. He does not depart his accomplishments, real or manufactured.

The danger in the local level scenario comparable. A governor or mayor who commits the public effort not only into his campaign appearances, but also does so by using the various delegation's being hypothetical when he resigned of the underdevelopment of an incumbent president in this country nothing reelection. He had to stand Marcos' 1969 endorsement bid, which was unconstitutional, in blood and memory—in Philippine history. Marcos opened no expense to get endorsed, competent lawsuits. And succeeded in unleashing billions of such magnitude the price plunged to such double its previous two other months later.

The petitioners cannot asking GMA not to run. The law is clear on it. She may she has not finished a term beyond which she may no longer run for reelection. But she has to equally clear when a president may not run to an incumbent because it is an inherently dangerous thing. Then principle should apply there all to a president governorship made as by people power. The law does not apply here to GMA because she is not an incumbent, it applies to **double** to. Are it is, ordering misconstrued.

The petition is reasonable, just and legally compelling. GMA must go on leave, if she wants to campaign for reelection.

The unique circumstance necessary is that we have a President who is disinterested to remain in power she is pulling no ropes to do so. The petition in this case we told the cases against GMA and Hontiveyd de Leon and Francisco Duque for breakthroughly having votes with Senator Aquino-Oreta should bring closer cases beyond the Comelec in the courts, and positions. It is a criminal offense. It is more than a matter of justice, it is a matter of survival. She do and do else, we may be looking at the prospect of a Marcos-type regime. Even if Japanese money is the search for more so it is, it's already asking a licensing.

GMA herself says she has been governing more than campaigning during the campaign period. Well, she has been governing in spite of the deputies not to launch all these "unfair-mess campaigns" in this case. Well, we already know about her capacity to tell the truth when she said she would not run. In fact, the main opponent is now fearful she does not to hold press conferences anymore. She has been campaigning more than governing. She has been campaigning almost on all she orders, a plain violation of Comelec rules. Enough is enough.

The petition is done GMA is up on leave in Presidency while campaigning is open. The same only is that the Gov government's demand to all the Secretary and their women who join the campaign. It is just harassment to us that GMA—our government's demand to all the campaigners. It is just harassment to us that GMA—our government's demand to all the campaigners. It is just harassment.

The country itself is at a serious crossroads. We can't distinguish harassment from justice, for how much, probity from right and wrong, it's time we stopped being a country, utopia or otherwise.

Back to square one with Piatco

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cabanban

"SAL the "lashua" of the landscape Mayaduel Water Services by the government part of a deal with the Ayalas? It has been alleged by critics of the Privatization that the deal was struck with the aspects to return for the latter's showing Sal. Bill de Castro, one of the supporters in their bidders, is now MWSS's four running mates, and presumably the first to be appointed by the government. He's the head of the government's Department of Transportation and Communications. Is it true that the government lost to much out as arrangements for the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) to the detriment of the country?

For instance, there are those who concede that the government has to honor the unfortunate deficiency of terms agreed by the ministers, but they also say that there would be no need to pay to the last peso if the administration settles for outright ownership of the Bonifacio Hospital instead of converting its 99 billion debt into 99 personal promissory notes to the firm. The Bonifacio is a prime federal decision to work with the Aquinos has been denied to the Bikazy spokesperson. But we bring in the chair of the campaign season, the Mayaduel mayor would be likely to be prepared to let the Palace "settle" the issue on humility of not only one but advantage to SBMA—unless the Bikazy make a bad solution.

* * *

A Manila Standard report by Ted Maraguy said that the long-running dispute over Nala 3, the new route of the air airport terminal that had been mothballed due to allegations of corruption in the contract, will soon be resolved "at the level of the government and the owners of the private contractors." This "lowest-to-lowest" settlement comes after the negotiations with a three-member Cabinet oversight committee "to the down and the up" of the controversy were filed by the airport owners before two world dispute organizations. Kumuha ng komisyon ang lawa, pagkatapos, no mga salogo, eh di ka pala nasawi?

The Standard says that the Nala 3 case by the government is one of the three to the Macapagal administration. As we now see, the case is back to square one, five years after the government decided to nullify the BOT contract with Piatco. In the meantime, that beautiful airport has been paralyzed and presumably facilities are deteriorating. Some media people argued two years ago that given all that had happened in Nala 3, including the fact that many high officials of the administration had given the green light to Piatco, the best thing to do was to negotiate quietly with Ike Chang. For nullification of Piatco's controversial renewal, we argued that after all, the Chengs seemed more than willing to talk things over quietly. The important thing now is open that airport. But sadly this administration chose to listen to wrong advice and came down on the Chengs with hammer and tongs, now the problem is more complicated than ever.

* * *

Two weeks ago, Linda Gradoni-Alvarez and I interviewed five women executives of our Soroptimist Club for a similar program, and we found out more exclusive details on how to alleviate poverty. Stella Galarion and Mary Grainger are what are known nowadays as modern "headhunters." Their management consultancy firm, George Court Grainger, is quite picky, specifically on "executive search services." For a fee, they seek and match talents among various professionals here, with the touch of undiscussed items and top Filipino executives in the country's largest firms, the Ortigas Group and San Miguel Corp., for nuclear and top management and in the communications fields.

Stella said: Even most hiring individual talents and corporate needs, among the services GCG & Associates offers are socio-economic information, local commercial intelligence, introduction to prominent citizens and business houses, market information, media facts and figures and everything that would be pertinent to our needful and required by the relationship between the hunter-talent and the hiring company.

* * *

Stellabel, the firm's managing director, and Grainger, its managing executive, pointed out that executive search services has grown as much, and one institution is that the Asian team leaders, as I mentioned in the case of my long-called American Business Group, is asked to the search for various professionals. Gardners, who has taken executive studies in clinical counseling psychology, is the senior executive, pointed out that this may be due to the fact that more and more women now assume the post of general managers.

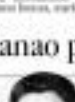
I queried our guests on just what skills and characteristics are needed by prospective applicants to successfully land high-level jobs in MNCs. These MNC jobs are coveted by our young people as they generally offer relatively better pay and benefits, as well as more opportunities.

Not lack of competence do. The lady execs replied that it helps no's much if one is more bent he top schools such as Ateneo, De La Salle and UP but ultimately, they said, other matters to what one can call "personality" help far more. Qualities like good work habits, such as teamwork, strong ethics, persistence and industriousness. I agree. Graduating from a top school helps open doors, but how one performs in the workplace is up to the individual employee. The habits I acquired there has supplied will give him the vital edge.

* * *

Again to do a big event to be like of Santo Leandro, the leading management firm headed of Manila. Cardinal Sin will celebrate the 80th anniversary of his ordination as a priest on April 1, with a Mass at 9 a.m. at the Manila Cathedral. Interested in the history picture of Manila is RE, it would be a nice gesture if Manila Mayor Lito Atienza could attend this Mass and be with him on that day as a form of moral support and to pay a tribute to his health.

Malaysia and the Mindanao peace process



KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Carlos Isagani T. Zarate

"LOOK at the region of the Philippines in the past year and you're dazing for a reason who could it be? Indochina was not his issue of the Philippines. Indonesia sees in no position with its latest problems. Singapore has no credibility with Islamic groups. Brunei is a non-player. Thailand has its own problems. Malaysia is the only one to appear a role so can for Malaysia," Malaysian academic Khoo Boo Teik said in June 2000 during an interview he peace advocate and legal officials Bolipata leaders.

Malaysia's Teik's comments were included in Anan'ar revised interview on the role of Malaysia as mediator in the on and off peace negotiations between the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. Though expressed almost two years ago, Teik's observations on Malaysia's role still aptly portrayed the closely linked yet distrusted interests of the Philippines and Malaysia, which, since 2001, already played host to the GRP-MILF peace panels. With Malaysia's role in the Philippine-MILF talks underscored by Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's recent visit to Malaysia, the government is taking a backseat.

Interestingly, both countries are presently in the back of elections.

Malaysia's ruling party Barisan now under the leadership of Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Dr. Mahamad Mahathir's successor, is facing strong challenges from the main Islamic opposition party Parti Islam Sebilaysia (Pas), and Anwar Ibrahim's one time ally-turned bitter foe jailed former Deputy Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

Back at home, the Macapagal administration is similarly facing stock and rock challenges in an election where issues like competence in governance, the charter change debate, corruption, poverty, economy and sovereignty, among others, are getting way to a pure popularity contest and hype.

Although, Malaysia may be less likely to suffer the alleged "Spanish Armada" because of its strong stand against the US-led "coalition of the willing," it cannot be discounted that the Philippines is in the United stage be to see this attacks, especially the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

Despite the optimistic assurances, the present administration cannot be too assured that it will not suffer the fate of outgoing Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar, who, like President Macapagal-Arroyo, is also an ardent backer of the US-led Iraq invasion.

Yet, whatever may be the results of the two elections, their outcome will have some effect in the course of the talks for peace in Mindanao and, in the New Armed Forces of the Philippines. In the meantime, Bautista died several times in the conduct of that a "peaceful solution" to the MILF rebellion is not only in the best interest of the Philippines but more so for Malaysia in several prominence. Malaysia's role in helping bring the MILF to the Malaysian officials is one in saying that the problem in Mindanao "has become part of our national interest."

Research and security concerns like the influx of Philippine refugees (both citizens, most of them displaced by war) in Sabah, the latest activities of the Abu Sayyaf and the right against global affiliation are among the common reasons cited why Malaysia has been so adversing a comprehensive resolution to the conflict in Mindanao.

Beyond these concerns, Bautista curiously observed that the Philippine claim on Sabah has been muted. But, before he died, MILF Chair Hashim Salamat, "among the key players in the peace process," reportedly said, "Sabah is ours." Malaysia is hoping that if the rebel pipe can improve but role in ending the conflict between the government and the MILF, Salamat may be dropped on claiming Sabah.

Sabah is an important factor in the Mindanao conflict and peace process if only because of geographical factor from historical proximity. Interestingly, Malaysia is one of those who was not in the list of countries that Abu Sayyaf has made its demands on the Philippine government. Malaysia's role in the current problem they bring to Sabah. But aside from such external interests, there are also internal dynamics involved. One of these academic points to the need to understand the politics of Sabah, in the Malaysian state of Sabah, in the Philippine state of Mindanao. Since most of the refugees are Muslims, their influx may be disadvantageous to the non-Muslim political parties. In it, already about one-third of the population in Sabah are Filipino-descended.

Malaysia's role in the peace process stems from geographic dimension involved. "Time is money."

There are real dynamics are also at play in the case of Malaysia. Being predominantly Muslim, there is a natural inclination in Malaysia for the Philippine Muslims to be sympathetic.

The ruling party Barisan, Bautista said, once about that is relaying the Muslim Filipinos, especially since it has "less significant votes" to bid in recent elections.

Also, the timing of the Malaysian "mediation," Bautista noted that the Muslim hostages crisis and the Philippine government's "all-out war" became the "catalysts to wake up calls." With this history, there are some key about things getting out of hand. With this in mind, Bautista feels the Philippine government to take the initiative before the conflict goes beyond control."

* * *

BE SITTED. The UP-Iloilo City Chapter is organizing a two-day Parliamentary Contending Legal Education seminar on March 25 and 26 at the Dacon Hotel and Convention Center. Interested parties may get in touch with the IBP Chapter Dr. Fee at Tel Nos. (033) 336-0170 and (033) 337-53.

Comment at isatiz_z@hotmail.com and bar_fee@yahoo.com

Daring and consensus

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

THE OTHER night I watched "The Madness of King George," and noted long one of the characters remarked that one of the King's problems is that he's "always in search of consensus." Is that a problem? Or politics, the character seemed to be suggesting, the reality of the king knows. "Who's to say what's normal in a king? Answered to, agreed with, supported in. Who can decide what such a daily chart of compliance?" To be cursed, dread, opposed—is weird, disagreeable—is since the dawn of time, that's the reality, and it never plans. It's the want of such emotion that makes rulers rigid." It was stated, it is the riddle in the character of Bernardo Poe Jr., that is the greatest weakness in his campaign. The still, unfounding notion of his personality presents two major challenges to finding those emerging during and execution.

The first such challenge of Poe as his having decided to run for office, and his having achieved that. Some legends in his running mates. In the first case, his decision to run, he did by no evidence to have any consensus to run. He did not even have the confidence that his act of daring was a personal one. The way he managed, or perhaps in more accurate is to say, mismanaged, the selection of his running mate, and those of his senatorial slate, showed, however, his deficiencies when it comes to finding consensus. Instead of seeking out the most ingenious noblesse oblige the very most, first by taking in Legarda, and then he, at first, declining to have Angara's brother in his senatorial slate. The result was that previous were two received pitching out for his endorsement by two leaders who he had previously rejected. Consensus, in other words, had not been sought.

The second challenge is that of finding consensus between voters in the campaign season. Poe's supporters would be brought before the Philippine people as the "anti-establishment" candidate, but the fact is that he is not. He is the candidate of the administration, and he is the candidate of the administration's allies. He is the candidate of the administration's allies. He is the candidate of the administration's allies. He

An uncompleted bridge too far

SO physician in his right mind would seem to kill a patient. In fact, the physician, reinforced by the Hippocratic Oath and swearing by it, says thus: "I will use my power to help the sick to the best of my ability and judgment. I will abstain from harming or varying any one by it..."

But a good hospital bordering Manila and Mandaluyong City is slowly but surely being "killed," for one year now, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital is, step by step, and by does intensifying degrees, "dying," by painless yet ethicalness, deathlike, yet silent health protocol are collapsing and leaving behind a trail of demoralization and financial hardships, all because of the unfinished bridge that spans the river between Sto. Nino, Manila and Mandaluyong City—the Scottish Bridge.

The administration of Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, which some regularly and expressing kindness from the powers-that-be, have called up, summoned and consulted officers, requesting that roads on the bridge be resumed and finished as soon as possible. But there has only been silence. There were no answers. Some officials said the budget for the repairs was not enough. Others in powers more supposed consultations with the Department of Public Works and Highways or the engineering department of the City of Manila, or Mandaluyong City. There were those. Misleadening was also considered. There were no answers. What was disheartening was the theory that the bridge repair project is now caught up in the ever raging political scrudder, or the familiar game of finger pointing, which according to a well-known Filipino cultural anthropologist from the University of the Philippines, is a common cultural flash in our people.

To the people in government, the bridge construction may be a small matter, but to the residents in the catchment area of this hospital such as Sto. Nino, Hampiler, Jasaa Ilaa, parts of Quezon City line from Mandaluyong City parts of Makati City and of Pasay City and the areas of Eastern Rizal Province even up to Antipolo City, they do not have to take out the crowded circuitous routes to reach their wanted and reliable hospital.

To the responsible authorities, shall we wait until after the elections for this small bridge to be finished? It is therefore, pathetic and of the most despicable type again, to point to many as the reason being sadly inflicted on this hapless hospital by whatever is in charge of this project! May this not be so!

Otherwise, some of the revered co-founders and pioneers of the hospital like Dr. Basilio J. Valdes and fewer legislators of the Senates of the Republic such as Senator Loren Legarda, especially as they point volunteer corporate social responsibility is gaining prominence importance.

The transparency act is only meaningful as it empowers a increasing that democratic citizens and societies. It is in our own time, I submit my confrere what seems to mind when they hear the cry law and indeed, they answered that the cry has seems to refer to a 19-cubic-old bundle.

Marketing is not just about the product, or the price, or place and promotion. It is also about reputability. Philip Kotler, recognized as the Father of Modern Marketing, has exposed several marketing which calls upon "marketers to build social and ethical considerations into their marketing processes."

Dreidrea Lazaraso once lived the call of the ad found and the marketing campaign of Dreidrea did. They see how the only pumps complaining. She, too, here in our school are alarmed by the ad.

—MICHAEL L. VIADO,
vice president for finance,
St. Luke's College Inc.,
Rizal Drive, Bagbag,
Nalua, Bayanan Dalaran

Brandy ad also riles schools

I FULLY support Cora Dorey's opinion in her "Elena Jarrod" column. (PDI, 3/11/04) I too, have wondered if no public official has seen these types of advertisements which should be banned. Isn't it amusing that we cause real fear in as some women in our country. I now wish to share with you my own views regarding the matter, as a teacher of marketing.

The universal basic understanding Excellent Lemonade's ad set to produce regarding the tag line, "Nakakalas ka na ba ng 15 years?" is indeed something that should draw immense groups and businesses schools, especially as they point volunteer corporate social responsibility is gaining prominence importance.

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vice president for finance,
St. Luke's College Inc.,
Rizal Drive, Bagbag,
Nalua, Bayanan Dalaran

MGB clarification on status of mines

ALLOW ye to clarify some of the issues raised by former Representative Edmundo, clarification and assistant corporate secretary of Benguet Corp., in his response to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' plans to issue on the rehabilitation of abandoned or inactive mines. ("Benguet Corp. mines are abandoned is unfound," PDI, 3/1/04)

The DENR press release was based on the results of the [illegible] Assessment of Abandoned/Inactive Mines in the Philippines conducted by Tetra Tech EM Inc., which was contracted by the DENR-Mines and Geosciences Bureau in 2000. The study was able to provide a sound detailed assessment of abandoned mines including operational mine or idle mining control or inactive mines in the country. It will serve as reference for the rehabilitation and remediation efforts that the government will undertake under Republic Act Under (The Mineral Policy Agenda on Revitalizing Mining in the Philippines).

Benguet Corp.'s Antamok Gold Operations (Antamok, Ipugan, Benguet), Masbate (Balatazar Mines Masbate, Lamboley) and the Acupan Mines (Acupan, Ipugan, Benguet) fall within the categories of inactive mines because these operations have not undertaken any mining activities for more than two years.

Today, the Acupan and Masbate mines are still operating.

By definition, inactive mines are mines in a state of preservation more than two years, possibly closed for a variety of reasons such as technical, economic, environmental or social and which have remaining possibilities of being reopened in the future.

The government recognizes that inactive mines are very different from abandoned mines and we have been careful in the use of these technical terms so as not to confuse the public. Abandoned mines are those where scheduled activities to accomplish the [illegible] have not been carried out. Unplanned sites, on the other hand, refer to abandoned mines for which the responsible party no longer exists or cannot be located while idle mining areas refer to abandoned mines that can actually under the jurisdiction Mines Regional Office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (formerly the Asset Privatization Office).

—EDWIN U. BOBIOSE,
OIC-Director,
Mines and
Geosciences Bureau,
Regional Office,
North Avenue,
Diliman, Quezon City

Gubat mayor contests inaccurate branding

Sir incumbent mayor of Gubat, Sorsogon, I would like to take exception to the news item in the Second Front page last Jan. 11 naming Gubat as one of the hottest spots in the entire country this coming election, as well as an hazardous electoral zoning on political hotbeds as per Philippine Nat. Police (PNP) statistics, as stated by the "Best Peoples" issue as claimed by the spokesperson of the Female Air Force Command, in fact, three favorite votes taken from the use of [illegible].

The reasons for the editorial and news item were unreliable for accuracy or balance. I checked with Col. Ramon Colmar, the army battalion commander in Sorsogon, the operations officer of the provincial PNP command as well as the Office of the Provincial Comelec Supervisor. If they made the report naming Gubat to one of the hottest spots in the Sorsogon. election. All of them denied making such a report.

This is my fourth election season and since 1986, I have not required any security in my locality in Sorsogon or any election-related violence during the four electoral contests I have gone through. The news item and editorial did speak injustice to the people of Gubat, who are peace-loving and God-fearing and do not cause to violence in issues political goals.

The outstanding contests in Donsol, Sorsogon has begun and a good number of rumors from all over the country go to us in Bicol Study in Gubat in the months of March to June. In June this year, some 350 of our fellow Gubatanons from all over the United States are scheduled to come home for our Binh-Gubat 2004. The news that Gubat has been branded as one of the "hottest spots" in all of Luzon might give them cause to cancel their homecoming, disappointing relatives and the people of Gubat who are eagerly waiting for this event.

—RODOLFO B. KAMES JR.,
mayor, Gubat, Sorsogon

[Bill's aide, Lyn sorry about Mayor Dong's] as to Ramon P. Uriarte's [illegible] appointed about allegations made about his town and Tandayapan his genuine concern for it. However, I wonder if he has really read the report. It seems that he misled words and data to it. In the first place, I never used the word "national" in my story, since embarks refers to an act against a wrong and/or person or group of persons. He wasn't paid any "retail" or Rep. Lou Veloso group. Please be informed also that it was him, his staff, Sorsogon Governor Sally Lee, Bros. de los Reyes and Office Industry Brigade commander Col. Ramon Farnas who were my sources of information through interviews I had with them.

The branding of Gubat as one of the hottest spots of Luzon cannot be found in my article. Instead I said, "Comelec Bicol director Zenaida Zaragoza refused to identify the incident as election related, he said the incident had to be investigated. It is not included by the provincial political operations."

—RONNIE LORIAS,
PDI Southern Luzon Stringer

Who would not be angry?

I AGREE 100 percent with Gracie de de Quiros. Who would not be angry seeing how so much of our taxes go to the pockets of crooks when there's so much poverty and misery around us? I have never bought the line that the Philippines is a poor nation. It is even, how come there are so many [illegible] to be shared and/or appointed to public office for the principal purpose of lining their pockets and living the good life?

I have witnessed first hand how much of our money spend by just one party-sick easy a thought that we merely P150 or so a year, the custom of a pupil to a public school can be paid up. I have seen how for P50, a family can get for a day sickel small plates of pancit. I have seen youths who, instead of being in school, are busy forming the [illegible] of jaipaychoring at the casino. How are we grateful to most serious crimes such as drug pushing.

How long can we be indifferent? What kind of crime are we creating up children? But it may occurred to those engaged in corrupt practices that we should [illegible] destroying the society that they will [illegible] and grandchildren will live in the future? That they are destroying the country as sure as the eggs [illegible] in the pan do?

—TERESITA SIOCHONG,
Tacurong, Sultan Kudarat,
Northern City

[illegible] Across the NATION [illegible]

Suspension of GSIS loan privilege in ARMM lifted

COTABATO CITY—Some 10,000 public schoolteachers in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao can now avail themselves again of Government Service Insurance System services.

On Thursday, Gov. Datumanong Hataman signed a memorandum of agreement between GSIS president and CEO Winston Garcia lifting the suspension of the loan privileges of ARMM teachers.

"A fund has been released to settle Cotpdil's obligations owed to the GSIS," said Hataman, who is concurrently the regional secretary of the Department of Education.

"The President has directed Gilí to address the problem head-on and we have the solution," Hataman said without elaborating where the amount came from and what will happen to the budget reconciliation GSIS since 1997.

Apparently the Macapagal administration sees the need to address the problem as quickly as possible because of its possible implications on the coming elections, said a schoolteacher upon learning of the "development."

The lifting came after the publication of news reports about GSIS' suspension of loan benefits to ARMM teachers because of the failure of ARMM's Department of Education to remit GSIS premiums each month.

As of Friday, DepEd-ARMM owed GSIS some P900,000 in employee and government shares in the same funding instrument, according to Nabil Ibrahim, GSIS Cotabato branch manager.

"All these amounts should have been remitted on time in GSIS' branches in Cotabato, Zamboanga and Iligan City," she said.

But Hataman said, "the problem has been settled."

Without naming names, Hataman blamed his predecessor for the DepEd mess. DepEd's obligations to GSIS started to pile up in 1997, according to GSIS's records.

The unremitted amount has ballooned to P694,850. Of this amount, P5,492 was for premiums and the rest for interest.

Last week, the Regional Legislative Assembly (RLA), ARMM's law-making body, conducted an inquiry "in aid of legislation" on Christian heirs' complaints.

Led by Maguindanao Schools Division Superintendent Udtog Ibrani, some 4,000 teachers in Maguindanao swooned to the RLA to air their grievances.

But lawyer Amel Dalakan, counsel for Maguindanao teachers, claimed that the inquiry could not solve the problem. He explained that whenever a citizen is owed some agency he would only be sent packing and the problem remains. But the teachers' chase to the GSIS, collected salaries credits, have not been remitted to GSIS.

"Where does the money go?" Ibrahim queried the teachers in asking Hataman first.

Hataman, interviewed over Radyo Inquirer dyRB, did not offer statistics. He, however, admitted that hundreds of applicants, including those handling the teachers' problems, are running the position of regional secretary.

"That is a very juicy post, many are interested," he said. "The present set-up stays."

The set-up he was referring to is that he acts as regional secretary, but he named an office-in-charge, Dr. Leovigilda Gardoce. DepEd-ARMM's director for finance and liaison to the Department of Budget and Management, Edwin Fernandez, PDI Mindanao bureau

Mayor hits town's inclusion in police list of hot spots

UBAY, Bohol—The mayor of this town has denounced the inclusion of the police's list of hot spots and accused Tanggon Bay, Juan Iedo, Lidon-OMDC of "political machination designed to undermine the local government unit."

Mayor Onofre Del Rosario, a nationalist under the NPC Lakas-LP banner, said there was no need to point to the declaration of the town as a hot spot.

He said Iedo had taken his report that he was embroiled in Barangay Chaves how to denounce.

He claimed that the decision was "slap-managed" by Iedo sent. "He was not authorized, that's this," he said.

He was referring to the report about Iedo and his town director who were attacked by 14 unidentified men while the congressman was about to speak at a mayors' symposium for a workstation at the village.

Maybe he wanted to re-live Gov Gabut, but we still not check him here. This is my 14th year as a mayor and I never donated or used private vehicles in the elections," an agitated Rosario told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

The Bureau tried to contact him several times but he could not be reached.

Philippine National Police spokesman Chief Inspector Roberto Rosero Jr. said PNP has recorded 42 incidents of poll violence and logged more than 500 arrests around the country, including Gobar, as potential sources of trouble.

In February he said the unanimpal board had sent a resolution to the Commission on Elections, PNP Chief Hermogenes Ebdane and Armed Forces Chief of Staff Narciso Abaya, "strongly denouncing the declusion of Gobar as a hot spot."

"The Mayor of Candijo was fired upon in an ambush, why did they not declare Candijo as hot spot?" Rosero said referring to the ambush of Candijo Mayor Bernardo Lumontad in early 2003. *With Southern Luzon Bureau*

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Track ready for FIM Int'l motocross

ALL IS set for the 2004 FIM Nortis Petron City International Motocross Championship this weekend when at least 60 riders from seven countries will test the riders' skills in the 1.5-km track at Subic.

FIM Asian Motocross president Marky Caragay recently conducted an order inspection of the venue and was delighted with the final preparations done on the track adjacent to the dirt trail.

"I commend Mayor Edward Rogelio and his counterparts for a job well done," said Caragay. "Their efforts in the past two months have no doubt set the stage for them to be able to accomplish their mission of transforming their local motocross track in accordance with FIM standards," he added.

Race officials started to submit yesterday the "no-name practice" rule to prevent local riders from gaining the undue advantage of familiarity with the track over foreign competitors.

The event is sponsored by the City of Puerto Princesa, Dirt Road Bikes, The Legend Hotel Palawan, Philippine Airlines, Bridgestone, Cebu Pacific, Wheels the Event, Oakley, Polycarb, Highland Products, Metrocycles, ABC 15, Speed, Region Headquarters, www.motocrossphilippines.com, the Philippine Sports Commission and the Tourism Department.

Thousands are expected to troop to the site to witness defending champion Glenn Quiatchon of Honorable Sec. Avelino Razon's local motocross heroes and Rebel de la Gen, Brian Lexington and Leon Sunday in senior against the regional riders of Eli Ann Perillo (silver) in the 125 c.c. event.

Aguilar scored up by his big win two Sundays ago, hopes to hack the odds in the tough Mid Pro Motocross Race of Champions title Tadakeru Ohtsuka and Indonesian motocross champion Aap Lindung.

Joining the ride spree are four other Asian champions—Chinese Ho Shaoming, Thailand's Chaiwat Bungpaeng, Malaysia's Hashanee and Indian's Dilip Parmeshwar.

Jun Andres, the National Junior Rider of the Year, will have his hands full against Guamanian junior riders Sean Lapanotech and Shane Montanez in the junior 85cc division. Also hunting for New Talent 85cc class is Gia Tuero from Guam.

"I will give it my best shot. I want to win this round. The premier's on our line. Emphysically and mentally ready for the challenge," said Aguilar.

The overall winner in this motorpetrol division will be awarded the Mayor Edward Rogelio Cup.

The weekend promises to be a motivator for fans with Western entertainment holding Round 4 of the national motocross series. The two-day affair is expected to draw over 100 participants representing the region's best with 11 categories.

The event also showcases Puerto Princesa and the country to the world through sports tourism. The pure-red 85cc event at the ESPN and total 150 networks and shows to over 600 million viewers worldwide in Guam, Malaysia, Macau, Singapore, United Arab Emirates and India.

For details on the FIM motor event, call Marissa at 0917-9992263.

Fat 74 ends Tiger's date with history

WOODS does his famous ultra-crouching this fourth green. AP

ORLANDO, Florida—Tiger Woods will have to make history some other time—and some other place.

He tried to become the first player to win the season-opener five straight years Sunday at the Ritz but he missed when he stumbled on a 12-foot 74 and fell more than a dozen shots behind the leaders.

Stuart Appleby teamed into the lead at 6-under 66. Phil Mickelson and Jeff Sluman, two straight birdies, then pulled away from Chad Campbell at the back nine to make command with 5-5 under 66.

Appleby, who came the season-opening Mercedes Championships of Hyundai, was at 10-under 200 and had a four-shot lead over Campbell (70).

Sluman (Dallas Medi-Center) open, had the worst score the 10th hole and made double bogey, then bogeyed the last two holes for a 74.

Clarke was at 206 in a large group that included John Daly, who overcame two double bogeys to shoot 1-under 70.

"Mm, I hited my best," Woods said. "It's not going to happen, but hopefully I can play well next week and get it going for Augusta. It's an very fine way, I think that will be a little for bigger than this one.

Woods holds his career-second the majors, although there's no ing him at the 180 shoot his chances of earning the consecutive tee by Arnold Palmer.

And it looked as if Woods was on his way when he opened with a 67-one shot off the lead. He was never the same after that.

Un Pahlay for his second rec- shot out of bounds to take double bogey, and never recovered in a round of 74. He began in the third round ended just to quit Eli.

Then, Woods flubbed a chip out of the rough on No. 2 and had to make a 15-foot putt just to escape the hole. Then, he hited to take off a chunk of the lake on the ninth, only to see his drive come about 100 feet short of land. He had to hit his third shot from the tee, hit another poor chip and made double bogey.

"I was trying to hit a high shot, and instead I hit a low," Woods said. "When I don't right, it's great."

SPORTSWATCH

Umadhay, Pilares lead advance of faves

QUEZON CITY—Marvin Umadhay finished #9 Chan, 8-0, 6-0, and Eladio Pilares edged John Mark Dominguez, 6-4, 6-3, in the boys' 14-under division of the start of the 2004 Kids Junior Tennis Open and Regional Workshop at the Ateneo Blue Eagle Gym. Other boys' winners were Umadhay and Pilares (second losses) Alexander, 6-0, 6-2; winner over Charles Ismael Ubina, and Ahmed Cuenca, who ousted Wilson Tan, 6-1, 1-0, 0. In the boys' 12-under division (first round) Jeffrey Ong edged Jeffrey Ong, 6-4, 6-4; Ahmed Cuenca, 6-0, 6-0; Ahmed Cuenca, 6-0, 6-0; Ahmed Cuenca, 6-0, 6-0

Church suspends priest running for mayoral post

LAS PIÑAS, Benguet—The Catholic Church has suspended a priest who has been serving the government for almost six years and who has even joined the mayoral race in this town.

A notice from the Diocesan of the Archdiocese of Lipa suspended from the priestly ministry Rev Fr. Libraldo Alcantarilla, along with another priest, Rev. Fr. Generoso Andalajao.

Demandales had been working for the provincial government since 1998. He was the administrator of the Lipa City Public College and acting Community Affairs Officer since 1998.

Earlier in Lipa an Archbishop Lucas Moreno Silver Jubilee Rotary's city administrator from 2001 to 2003.

On Jan. 5, he filed his certificate of candidacy for the mayoral post of this Provincial town, with the Commission on Elections under the ruling Lakas-CMD party.

Demandales said he was glad the campaign rule was not in effect when he filed his candidacy for church employees.

It would mean I have to [illegible] church duties temporarily," he said.

The suspension order, signed by Bishop Ambo Galang, the archdiocesan administrator of Lipa, and Fr. Gerard Francis Palmarejo, Chancellor of the Archdiocese of Lipa, took effect on March 1 for Demandales and Feb. 27 for Andalajao.

The suspended priests were prohibited from celebrating the sacraments. Mel Magalong, PDI Head Sara Gaspar Flavier)

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Priest files libel suit against local paper

PAGADIAN CITY—Father Edmund Rosa, parish priest of San Francisco town, has filed libel charges against several newspaper for publishing a column that accused him of pilfering in the distribution relief goods for the victims of the devastating landslides in December 2003 that killed at least 250 persons.

Rosa also asked the court to order the respondent to pay him P1.5 million as damages for besmirching his reputation and humiliating him in the community.

Named respondents in the complaint filed today at the Provincial Prosecutor's Office are Monday to Darling Herrera, publisher and editor in chief of Sa Mindanao Mail.

The case stemmed from a column written by one Bobsters, obviously a pen name, which was published in the weekly paper's Jan. 5-11 issue.

The column claimed that before giving the relief goods to the victims, Rosa allegedly told the victims that there were [illegible] Lee, Imelda Lotilla.

The column also hit Rosa, the parish administrator of St. Isidore Parish in San Francisco, for not blessing those who died in the tragedy and for being a hustling, who created his own [illegible] just to be seen on television. Knowing that he was a candidate for mayor.

Ben Literato, PDI Visayas Bureau

Sacking of Dolphy …

Transcription N/A

tivities Boo Boo Boo, and it was "an open secret that the administration has been bothered by Dolphy's show of support to Mr. Poe, so his head was allowed to appease the gods of Malacañang."

Signion Reyes told the reporter-classification of Dolphy's show was "Da Queen's gambit to stop Fe King," in reference to Mr. Macapagal and Poe, respectively.

"The press was ascribed as being a tender on the Queen's face. That's the political play," Signion Reyes said.

The Palahoff was quick to deny this. "Certainly not. I didn't even know the Dolphy's show existed," she said at a press conference in Iloilo City where she is campaigning.

Hoaring Secretary Michael Defensor, the President's campaign spokesperson, said Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye also refuted sternly denied the allegation.

"Dolphy is beyond this strategy. We have our presidentiables come and go and Dolphy is there. He is the father of the Philippine showbiz itself," he said.

Brigade Tarlac, secretary general of the PD Volunteers Brigade (PDVB), said the Poes could have removed the Kapus-owned ABS-CBN channel 2 franchise if Dolphy is established for his all-out support for Poe and "to serve as an outrageous warning to show her side that they better think twice about attacking their media and his PP."

Dolphy himself was unavailable for comment. He was reported to have gone on an out-of-the-country trip to ABS-CBN show to talk about "The Ball," but instead Mabuti Maniwala, ABS-CBN vice president for government, corporate affairs and public relations, read the statement.

"ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corporation is the subsidiary that has not received a preliminary discussion between management and Dolphy about the program. However the discussions are matters pertaining to both ABS-CBN and Mr. Rodolfo 'Dolphy' Quiñon."

"The network leaves it to the discretion of Dolphy whether to disclose this matter or portions of the discussion."

The network added that "some quarters are maliciously injecting politics in a purely show business issue. … The management of ABS-CBN has always respected, as it continues to respect, the right of its employees and talents to express their political preferences, whether for candidates they may wish to support and vote in the coming elections … ABS-CBN has never and will never cause any undue influence or to embarrass or hinder right to choose candidates … they may wish to support this May election."

Alito Mandolana gave the statement. "The front" head Rey Abundo quickly signed to other has-bang there has been like the Dolphy-Erap-Loi-Grace Miner and Lolo de Leon.

Some reacts

"You can blame people for thinking politics about this position. Dolphy and Poe's campaign manager Jess Nonato Bello III, is common to the ABS-CBN statement.

"As early as three weeks ago, information trending or was that ABS-CBN management was said to have told their stars and talents that they must support Poe," Nonato said. "We're not a like that. We have the right to choose who we support."

Group seeks presidential bets' agenda for jobless

[illegible]

crisis and had already reached the same levels as the 1984-85 recession.

Based on National Statistics Office data, about 4 million Filipinos, including 610,000 college graduates, were jobless in January. The 11-percent unemployment rate was higher than the 10.6 percent in January 2003. (The actual unemployment rate is higher because those who have given up hope of finding a job and have no longer looking for one are not counted as unemployed.)

Of the 33.8 million Filipinos who are employed, 16 percent or more than 5.5 million are underemployed, according to the NSO statistic. They are looking for better jobs or one in need of longer working hours to compensate their low salaries or short working hours.

Because many Filipinos are "working for jobs, those who are employed cannot ask for higher wages, according to the AFL.

The labor group noted that the crisis was happening amid steady growth in the gross domestic product (the total value of goods produced and services rendered in a given period).

The GDP grew about 4.5 percent annually over the past six years, indicating that progress is concentrated in the upper tiers of society, according to the AFL.

The AFL said the crisis was due to wrong economic policies the government had been pursuing. Policies like aggressive import liberalization and tariff reduction had led to import dependence and neglected the development of the country's local business sector the group said.

The labor group said the government was relying heavily on foreign investments for job opportunities, but foreign investments have not translated into more jobs for Filipinos, according to the AFL.

Pascual said a "change in mentality" was needed among government leaders to address the unemployment crisis.

Labor Secretary-general Jacinto Ines said the government should focus on developing local industries.

But he said the presidential candidates could not commit to changing the current economic policies out of fear of antagonizing big businessmen and powerful foreign investors.

Besides the unemployment crisis, the country is also facing a debt crisis, but the two main contenders in the May presidential election have offered few concrete plans to address the country's economic woes.

With another President Macapagal-Arroyo not sworn into [illegible] by offering hard financial policies, the pain has gone into a standstill, as the business community holds its breath.

With a report from AFP

BOMBO RADYO DZNC AND STAR FM CAUAYAN CITY CLOSED!!!

THE TRUE STORY

The whole Province of Isabela witnessed the absurd and baseless accusations hurled by the so-called "economical" personalities and left-leaning groups, designed to misinform and misinform the people in the guise of protesting against the closure of Bombo Radyo and Star FM Cauayan City. These people never reflect the real hopes, dreams and grievances of the masses. Moreover, they have never been instrumental in bringing development in the Isabelenos.

BOMBO RADYO DZNC CAUAYAN was closed in the year 2002 for failure to secure ZONING CLEARANCE, a requirement for application for Mayor's permit.

As a result of the closure, BOMBO filed a Special Civil Action for **Mandamus** against the City of Cauayan, et. al docketed as SCA No. 39-124

On January 14, 2003, BOMBO submitted the following documents:

1.) "Assumption of Direct Jurisdiction" dated December 3, 2001 docketed as DAR Administrative Case No. A-02004-ITA-402 signed by Director Alvino Aydinan; and

2.) "ORDER" dated March 11, 2002 docketed as DAR **administrative Case No. A-02004-ITA-402** also signed by Dir. Alvino Aydinan

(hereto referred to as **DAR ORDERS**)

BOMBO RADYO was issued the Mayor's permit based on the above-mentioned documents. The City of Cauayan then counsel, filed a motion to dismiss SCA No. 39-124 for being moot and academic. BOMBO having been issued the Mayor's permit. The case was dismissed.

Inquiries were made with the Regional Office of the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR), Region II. The DAR thru Mr. Pedrito Mariano, Head of the Regional Center for Land Use Policy, Planning and Implementation (RCLUPP) issued a certification stating among others, that the said Office **has no official records nor case docketed of the petition filed by Bombo Radyo and the order issued bearing Administrative Case No. A-02004-ITA-402.**

On March 4, 2005, BOMBO RADYO was required to show proof of genuineness of the **DAR Orders**, otherwise, their Mayor's Permit shall be revoked. BOMBO RADYO asked for time to investigate the matter. The City of Cauayan gave them 15 days. Upon successive requests made by BOMBO Radyo, the time was extended in thirty days, to six months, to another 15 days until such time that their Mayor's Permit expired on December 2005.

It appears that BOMBO knew all along that the **DAR ORDERS** are not on file with the Office of the DAR Region II, its records Section and RCLUPP. A certified true copy of a letter dated October 30, 2003, addressed to **Chavrey Subigan** Station manager of BOMBO DZNC) and signed by Regional Director Renato Navata of the DAR Regional Office stated among others, that **there are no such DAR ORDERS** docketed on the book of entry of the DAR Regional Office, its Records Section and the RCLUPP) **neither are there any official records appertaining thereto which are on file** with the said offices.

On February 17, 2004, the City of Cauayan caused the closure of all business establishments operating without the mayor's permit. **BOMBO RADYO VOLUNTARILY CLOSED.**

On February 27, 2004, a criminal complaint for **FALSIFICATION BY PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS AND USE OF FALSIFIED DOCUMENTS** was filed against **CHARMY BARBIAN** and Davy Candaosan (Station Manager - Star FM).

The closure of Bombo Radyo and STAR FM reflects the firm stand of the City Government of Cauayan on implementing the law. Nobody should be exempted from the application of the law be it the clergy.

The **PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF CAUAYAN**, worked so hard to bring progress and development in the City. They know *from their own experience* that strict compliance and enforcement of the law is the single best instrument to ensure continuing progress in the City. They *know, first hand*, that support and cooperation with the City Government offers a far more promising method of ensuring continued progress *than does the threat of retaliation.*

CAUAYAN IS A CITY

WHERE THE INTEREST OF ITS CONSTITUENTS, LAW AND JUSTICE

REMAIN STRONGER.

INDEED, BOMBO RADYO CAUAYAN HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO BRING TO THE PEOPLE THE TRUTH.

DECEPTION, ILLEGALITIES AND OBVIOUS FABRICATION OF LIES AND MUD-SLINGING WILL NOT BRING DEVELOPMENT TO THE CAUAYEÑOS AND THE ISABELINOS IN GENERAL.

THE EXERCISE OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND OF THE PRESS IS FOUND IN *TRUTH, HONESTY* AND *RESPONSIBILITY* TO THE PEOPLE.

ATTY. ELIZARO L DELMENDO

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

THE CHARM OFFENSIVE

DUMAGUETE CITY: Tapping the student vote, the President makes a pitch before graduates of the Central Visayas Polytechnic University.

DAVAO DEL NORTE: He plays to type for the peripatetic Ms Macapagal, an artist in the penitas wearing the tribal finery of Mindanao's indigenous peoples.

Discipline, mem'ry for names, places, forever young

Continued from A1

formation at Ateneo de Davao—that relatively plays up the achievements under Ms Macapagal's administration in fighting crime and corruption, going after the unemployed, subduing local rebellions and tending insurgency among others.

More than this, however, is that among the five presidential candidates, Ms Macapagal is the most seasoned in the art of campaigning. She was a senator for two terms and, later, vice president before she assumed the presidency after her predecessor, Joseph Estrada, was deposed in January 2001.

All in the family

It also helps that this is the daughter of a former president, a unique circumstance not lost on her handlers who add to her litany of qualifications the fact that she is the only President's daughter in Philippine history who has become President and who has declared to seek a full term.

The comparisons with her father, former President Diosdado Macapagal, are inevitable.

Ms Macapagal, in fact, was quoted in an interview once that she was very much her father's daughter, "in almost every sense, politically and personally."

What sets her apart, the picked up from him (her boss helped her enormously in her campaigning today?

MONDAY, MARCH 22, 2004 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BUSINESS

John Raoul G. Manalo
Assistant Editor Carmela S. Martinez

Gov't revives plan to tax 'texting'

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT is reviving a proposal to impose an excise tax on text messages, a possible lucrative revenue source that can substantially ease its budget deficit woes.

According to a ranking Finance official, the government might eventually tap text messaging for additional revenues as it could reduce the deficit and advance its target of having a balanced budget by 2009.

"If we do it (taxing text messages), it will provide very huge revenues. We have found the issue interesting (but) one part of the discussions include questions raised against the proposal," the finance official said.

The official said that with the estimated 116 million text messages sent a day, the government could generate billions of pesos if it would pursue the implementation of taxing text messages.

Should a consensus on a new excise tax be imposed on such sent text messages, the government could earn roughly P600 million a year. With a 10-centavo excise tax, it could generate P1.2 billion.

The figures, however, does not consider the amount of free text messages granted by telecommunications companies. "But the revenue figures will still be big even if the number of free text messages are deducted," the official said.

But while the government is backpedaling as it aims down the deficit, which stood at P199.9 billion in 2003, it may not be able to implement the proposal without first dealing with questions raised against imposing the current messages.

One concern raised against the move is whether text messages really be subject to excise tax. Another government official said imposing excise tax on text messages "goes many times over the true principle behind (the) tax."

"Excise tax should only be imposed on things that have 'negative externalities', such as alcohol, cigarettes, luxury vehicles and jewelry. Why should we include texting?" the official said.

Revenue Deputy Commissioner Rex Bonoan likewise expressed reservations over the proposal, saying text messages were already covered by the value-added tax on prepaid cellular cards.

"There are a lot of issues to be considered in taxing text messages. If we will be taxing everybody, why not impose a million tax on cell phone calls? Or what about landline telephone services that also offer a texting feature?" she said.

The government is preparing a set of additional revenue-generating measures that will boost tax collection by about P40 billion a year. The Development Budget Coordination Committee is set to discuss the proposed tax measures, which may include the plan to tax text messages.

The move to come up with additional revenue measures is intended to help the government achieve its fiscal goal of narrowing the budget deficit. This year, the government is hoping to trim the budget gap to P161.6 billion.

BSP, banks agree on deposit secrecy waiver

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO Sentral ng Pilipinas and the Bankers Association of the Philippines have agreed to eliminate bank secrecy in checking a person's money laundering activities.

BSP Governor Rafael Buenaventura, who confirmed a meeting with bankers last week, said the bankers had accepted the proposal for the BSP to participate in class gathering and processing.

Under the plan, the banks will provide data on bank "payees" and "importers" but of businesses to the AMLC, which will then process the information. Without identifying the bankers to protect each one's competitive edge, the BSP will only be provided information in the aggregate.

But to make such a system possible, some of the bank secrecy laws should be amended as soon as an application is submitted. The BSP is now also ready an agreement with the bankers on the recovery system.

Buenaventura said the bankers agreed that the proposed waiver "made sense."

"We just have to work it out and eventually make a clear case and for all. That could be done in a supplement. They know they'll have to do it for their own good," he said.

Without a credit history, he said the banks' risk weighting would increase.

To date, the Bankers Association of the Philippines has a data-gathering facility which, however, is limited only to transactions on delinquent borrowers. In general, banks are still hesitant to share information on good borrowers with their peers as they fear this will reduce their competitive edge.

The proposed secrecy law would loosen with also link up with the Securities of Thrift Banks and the Rural Bankers Association of the Philippines.

"Eventually we'd like to have a law passed," Buenaventura said, referring to enhancements under the BSP's charter against putting up any such solution. Otherwise, the BSP would have put up a central system.

The BSP chief said he believed a lot of big tax evaders would not have gone scot-free as a

Creditors want funds for Home Cable put in escrow

By Clarissa S. Batino

EYES Inform ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. could raise $30 million through borrowing so that its cable TV arm would finalize its merger with PLDT's Philippine Home Cable Holdings, some creditors of Home Cable are already clamoring to put the funds in escrow to protect their interests in the company amounting to $1.35 billion.

A source from a Home Cable creditor said that placing the funds in escrow would guarantee that the money would be used for the expansion of Beyond Cable Holdings Inc.

Starmod Cable is the operating entity from the merger of ABS-CBN, the Yuson Corp. and General CATV Inc. with Home Cable of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. The latter group will own two-thirds of the consolidated while PLDT will own the balance.

While most of Home Cable's about 115,000 units have agreed to restructure the cable firm's debt provided there would be a $50 million inflow, many would like to see that the actual infusion of the investment committed by ABS-CBN.

The broadcast firm last week said it would borrow $20 million from a foreign bank. Of the amount, $5 million will be used to update loan payments while $25 million will be earmarked for the acquisition of an up house, which protect cable signals from pirates.

"Creditors would like some assurance that the money would be infused into the cable business and make the pact venture viable. The money must be placed in escrow," said a source involved in the restructuring.

C. LUZON GROWTH CENTER

BCDA affiliate, Sudeco to develop ecozone, tourism hubs in Bataan

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE BASES Conversion Development Authority said that its subsidiary Bataan Technology Park Inc. (BTPI) recently signed an agreement with Subic Bay Development and Industrial Estate (Sudeco) on the joint development of certain pieces of property in Bataan.

BTPI president and CEO Isaac Perez III said the agreement was expected to spur economic growth in Central Luzon.

"We (BTPI and Sudeco) can now jointly develop the parcels of land to make them more attractive to business locators and tourists leading to the creation of more jobs in the region," Perez said.

BTPI is the private manager and administrator of the duty-free industrial economic zone in Morong, Bataan. The zone used to house the Philippine Refugee Processing Center.

The Bataan Technology Park is a 365-hectare special economic zone designed to host high-tech agricultural and aquaculture ventures.

The locators is also being promoted as a tourist destination and events for out-of-town investors, workshops and local wedding properties.

Sudeco, for its part, owns a 170-ha land in Mariveles, Bataan and Subic in Morong.

Sudeco plans to develop the property for residential and commercial uses as well as for recreation and leisure activities.

"Sudeco's property has a pristine beach with fine, powdery sand and is considered among the finest beaches in the country," Perez said.

He said that under the agreement, BTPI and Sudeco would conduct programs designed to educate people about development practices that are environmentally friendly and sustainable.

Perez also noted, "The latest for development is a mere 15-minute drive from the Subic Bay Freeport via the Subic-Morong link. It is very accessible from the freeport's airport and seaport facilities."

The Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority itself is undertaking projects geared for higher tourist traffic.

SBMA Chair Felicito C. Payumo announced last week that construction of a P200-million beach-front hotel of the freeport's Green Bay marina complex had started.

Payumo said the planned 30-room Subic Bah Hotel would boost the SBMA's effort to promote the economic zone not only as an industrial estate but also as a tourist destination.

This leader is a woman!

MINDANAWORLD

Sajid Bangsa Moro

UNTIL a few years ago, working and getting myself involved in the Moro crisis arena was like exhausting in a pool of paradoxes. 'Brave' and 'control' were the daily buzzwords, and normally the top of the hierarchy were old-blooded politicians. It's easy to spot the topic—tough, arrogant and reckless.

Maybe my small experience was 'small' to convince them, hoping that they would go up the corporate ladder faster. But most often, are left uncomfortable because that wasn't the motive.

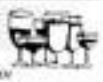
Mr David many challenges in moving up, sometimes from 'the' heavy sometimes, non-supportive home or colleagues, sexual discrimination and male chauvinism.

It's a study of 10 women holding middle management positions in 10 Philippine 500 companies, it was concluded that women were under enormous pressure to do outstanding work consistently and consistently demonstrate competency on the job. Female managers have to work harder to be noticed and to prove that they can to handle the job, the family and everything else.

One business woman told me, "I am more at a disadvantage than any male person because we are excluded from the old boys' network. This network is crucial to accessing information about [illegible] and [illegible] and [illegible] and

Derailed

COCKTALES



Victor C. Ago-Ado

MODOS cabs: a case have been mounting on the operation of the Edsa light rail system that sees the staff of Transportation Investment Group's Manuel Mendoza have been urging that an summit to take more decisive measures before launch an armed, any serious accident happens.

The heads of the planning, financial, legal and technical services of the Department of Transportation and Communication held a special workshop in December to propose a 60-day committee on 12 safety, construction and financial issues that have been troubling the DOTC and Metro Rail Transit Corp.

Chief among their concerns is the "excessive lateral movement" occurring to the swaying of the trains, which had been ordered and brought to the attention of Metro Rail Transit chair Robert John Bellosillo "as early as May 2000."

According to the prospectus, Bellosillo, to address the problem, ordered the train speed be reduced to 60 kilometer per hour from the specified 65 kph and the frequent lubrication of rails in tight curves.

Still, "(these) remedial measures, including the reprofiling (the wheels) ... are not in accordance with performance specifications and have been proven to be ineffective," according to the draft letter prepared by the staff for Mendoza's signature even before the December workshop.

The letter, as well as the "parachute" of items that Metro Rail needs to address, including the non-replacement of rusted elevated contact rail/grounding cables that could cause a system wide short circuit, has gathered dust in Mendoza's office.

Mendoza's staff also noted that since Rail has been three Metro Rail passengers who had been injured in separate accidents but, in all those years, there still has been no clear provision as to extent of liability between Metro Rail as owner of the light rail facility and the DOTC/Metrostar Express as the operator.

The DOTC staff recommendation is that DOTC-Metrostar Express should secure comprehensive motor vehicle insurance cover but, in the same vein, moved that no funding has been allocated for such a "high cost" purpose in the government budget.

Despite the absence of cash backing, Secretary Isidro Lapeña has already asked the DOTC to source Metro Rail P6.1 million in insurance premium for 2000.

'News' for sale I

AMBASSADOR to the United Kingdom Edgardo Espiritu denies that he has reached an understanding to sell the San Francisco-based Philippine News, as reported Friday in this column, to Manila Times publisher Dante Ang.

"To set the record straight, the majority ownership of the newspaper is not for sale now or in the future," Espiritu said in an e-mailed statement.

(Correction right. We stand by our story.)

The ex-banker-finance secretary clarified that he acquired the Fil-Am weekly in 1994, not during the Ramos years.

As regards the Philcorp claims, Espiritu said his family divested of its entire 38 percent stake in the investment house in 1997. "Long before the alleged default of borrowers borrowed by Philcorp (the) year 2000."

Movable target

PEOPLESOFT has delayed anew the opening of its Pinklapat branch; the new target would now be June 2000.

The San Diego, California-based warehouse chain did not give any reason for the delay. Located in the Sucat Business Park on the reclaimed area off Roxas Blvd., the new PeopleSoft store was supposed to open early next month, from its original November 1999 inauguration date.

PeopleSoft continues to encounter what analysts euphemistically call a challenging environment. Its 29 warehouses in China and Third World locations including the Philippines reported a consolidated 9.8 percent decrease in net sales in the six-month period to February.

Heard through the grapevine

CONSTRUCTION magnate Rogelio Romero suspects customer financial woes for rapper Baron A. as behind the regulatory crackdown blocks being encountered by Romero's new Bulacan Custom Steel Remelting Plant.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com or cocktales_pdi@hotmail.com.)

BSP, banks ...

Viewpoint B3

pool if there were an existing credit bureau that would have made banks more aware of any borrowers' outstanding liabilities.

He said those were why cases being granted guarantees could loses by different banks would usually be tempted to use all the funds and expand into riskier businesses. But if the banks knew that one borrower had an existing line with another bank, even without knowing the identity of the bank, the banks would know how much more to lend or refuse to lend to him/her based on the borrower's net worth.

The BSP has been providing the R&P to spearhead the creation of a national credit bureau given its own participation funds in order to do this.

The creation of a centralized credit bureau is tied to the reforms being undertaken by the BSP to boost the benchmarks for capital adequacy in line with the standards of Bank for International Settlements.

Garments exports down 7.1% in 1st two months of 2004

By Rusiel W. Domingo

GARMENTS exports in February dropped 5.9 percent to $209 million from $221 million in the same period last year due to low volumes sent to the United States, the Garments and Textiles Export Board reported.

The agency said combined income figures for January and February also showed a 7.1 percent decline to $471 million from $507 million in the first two months of 2003.

Still, the garments industry was the biggest dollar earner from January to February, the GTEB added.

However, GTEB executive director Imelda Jalandoni expressed optimism that the numbers would improve in the coming months as the summer buying season peaked in the United States and importation for the fall season began.

Garments exports to the US in February dropped 10.7 percent to $146 million from $166 million in the same period last year, the Garments and Textiles Export Board reported.

The agency said revenues from US exports from January to February also showed a 10.6 percent decline to $334 million from $373 million in the first two months of 2003.

Jalandoni cited market analysts showing that while duties down February trading were stiff competition from emerging exporters in Mexico and China as well as the Americans' increased safeguard measures in anticipation of a quota-free global market next year.

"What the exuberance in the US market brought about by rising consumer confidence will likely bring our garments exports in the coming months," Jalandoni said.

On the other hand, garments exports to Europe in February grew 23.9 percent to $29 million from $17 million in the same period last year.

Earnings from shipments to Europe in the first two months went up 8.8 percent to $71 million from $66 million a year ago.

GTEB data showed that trading of garments with France, Greece, Italy and Austria doubled while that with Great Britain and the Benelux countries—Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg—grew by an average of 50 percent.

Industry experts said the strengthening of the euro and the steady recovery of European Union nations helped increase business with the European market.

Managing the debt

NO FREE LUNCH

Carlito F. Rubio

rubio@bworld.com.ph

Closing the gap

Addressing the debt problem first calls for plugging the deficit at the soonest possible time. Wishing till 2009 to do so, which is the current target of the government, is a perhaps realistic under current circumstances, but is rather unambitious and inadequate. Taking the Department of Finance's term P240 billion estimate of annual revenues foregone from tax evasion and inflated revenue holidays, we can dismantle the deficit within a year if the government can stop the revenue and tax expenditure spigots. Given the right leadership, political will, and cooperation from the taxpaying public, this is not impossible.

Other revenue measures already in the pipeline would reportedly add close to P100 billion in new revenues, including the much-vaunted indexation of the excise taxes on "sin products." Only an estimated 150 million text messages sent by Filipinos everyday, about P55 billion is spent by Filipinos in text messages in a year. Imposing a special levy of say 10 centavos per text message would yield up to half that amount, subject to some reduction in volume due to the higher cost. I suspect the reduction would not be that large, though, as I see Filipinos' demand for texting to be rather inelastic. Even more that no financial measure of those who can well afford it, by imposing new taxes on visible wealth such as second (and third and fourth) homes, on privately owned yachts and aircraft, and so on.

Repudiation: suicide?

There has long been a chance from certain sectors for the government to reject outright payment on debts originally incurred under questionable circumstances. The most prominent example is the Marcos-era nuclear power plant (BNPP), a mega-project of the Marcos years that was completed but never used due to threat of technical problems and risks, and for which the country reportedly continues to pay about $500,000 a day. Other "bobost items" incurred during the Marcos years have also been singled out by debt activists for repudiation.

The problem with repudiating debt is that it is a cure formula for shutting our country off from the financial markets, for as long as our country needs to borrow from international financial markets, a court by creditors would be able to take such unilateral action on our obligations. No matter how unsound the circumstances under which they were incurred, debt obligations are commitments that must be honored. Certainly, there must be no doubt on those responsible for the wrongdoing surrounding such loans, but nonetheless, the country's honor and dignity demands that our obligations be honored.

The same principle applies to so-called onerous contracts surrounding public projects, like the overbuilt Subic airport terminal, which must be honored once signed and implemented. If any wrongdoing is otherwise exhibited by the courts, the wrongdoers must be punished with the full force of the law, but the whole country's credibility suffers and its attractiveness as an investment site diminishes when supplemental contracts are undone by the government. Commissions must be honored and the public interest should not be sacrificed by holding project implementation even in such cases.

Debt swaps: limited relief

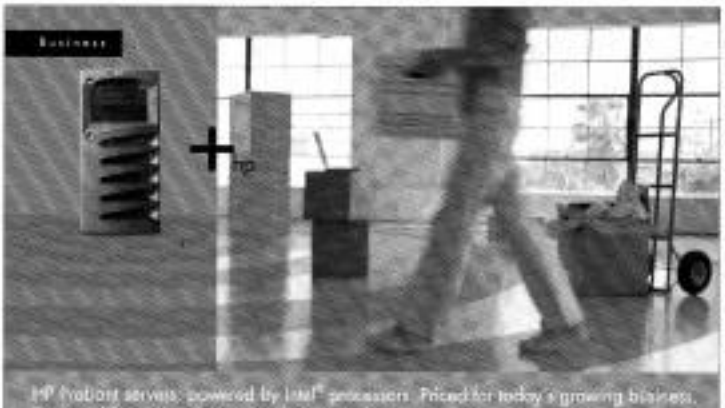
Certain candidates have mentioned debt swaps as a possible instrument for reducing the country's debt. There are arrangements whereby the lender agrees to donate the payments for the loan to worthy development projects, for instance, and the debtor country agrees to commit counterpart funds for the project. The most common type of debt swap we have had so far, the proceeds are earmarked for environmental protection projects. While these arrangements help, there is only so much debt reduction we can expect from this source. This is because the debtor country agrees to donate its receivable principal or interest payments to the country, and the borrower government must also agree to allocate the funds to the identified use. A debt swap is an outright grant on the part of the lender, but beneficiaries on the part of financial institutions has declined.

Restructuring and debt relief

The modern mantra called negotiation when a leading presidential candidate indicated that he would push for a restructuring of the country's outstanding debt. In a sense, the negative market reaction was unwarranted because given limited options, this is a concrete that must be explored by whatever becomes the next president of the country. Some say that the market reacted not so much to the idea of negotiated debt restructuring per se—which, after all, machines have granted to other countries like Poland and Indonesia before—but more to the suspicion that the candidate concerned didn't know the difference between restructuring and repudiation.

But a negotiated and mutually agreed stretching out of debt payment terms and even a special grace period of 2-3 years) eminently an option that must be explored with the creditors. Indeed, the government would no doubt be relieved to be able to use the budget savings from debt relief to finance priorities and productive use. This, after all, would serve to further strengthen the country's credit worthiness and secure eventual repayment of future obligations.

Comments welcome at rubiofc@yahoo.com.



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Food Terminal posts profit

By Clarissa A. Cayhua

FOR the first time in five years, state-owned Food Terminal Inc. posted a profit of P1.6 million last year.

"The completion of contracts with operating tenants of [terminal] to adjust lease rates to current market rates; the aggressively implementing the changes," said National Food Authority Administrator Arthur C. Yap.

Yap said that turning the FTI into a profitable venture was a tedious process but "the fundamentals rich must be made attractive to private investors."

The NFA, which administers the food processing zone, is currently seeking offers from developers and operators to put up a new wet market and additional cold storage facilities in the FTI compound in Taguig.

"We are coordinating with the Asian Development Bank [National Economic and Development Authority] on how to obtain ODA funding for these facilities," said Yap.

He also said the NFA was coordinating with the Privatization Management Office (PMO) for the possible sale of certain idle portions of the industrial estate. Certain contracts, found onerous, would be allowed to lapse.

Some 10,000 hectares of FTI properties will likely be leased out or sold to industries involved in agro-industry, FTI Head, Yap noted.

Yap added that JSI Technologies Inc. had signified interest to buying part of the FTI property.

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Energy chief backs renewal of Veco franchise

CEBU City business community leaders hailed the resolution of a long-standing conflict among local members of Visayan Electric Co. (Veco), saying this will long relief to the power supply situation in the area.

The Cebu-ni and Abonic groups in the Veco board recently agreed to amicably settle their differences such as those in the management of its assets, franchise and businesses.

The business leaders said the resolution "will boost efforts to stabilize and further improve the city's power supply situation." Veco supplies all of the city's electricity requirements.

The Cebu City Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI) earlier urged the government, through the Department of Energy, to "act quickly on the Veco issues." The two had threatened to jeopardize the renewal of the power distributor's franchise which expired last year.

Energy Secretary Vincent Perez Jr., chief of the National Electrification Council, moved to grant Veco a provisional franchise renewal subject to the resolution of internal issues.

CCCI president Carlos Go said he could see the end of the row "sounds happy that there will be no brownouts in Cebu City especially when the second probe is initiated."

The business community also cited the government's efforts to upgrade power transmission facilities saying these would ensure them more reliable power supply.

They said the National Transmission Corporation (Transco) informed them that the government has started the transmission upgrading program involving a new substation in Mabolo, Cebu.

Transco president Dr. Allan T. Grim said the P200.7 million project is expected to be completed by September this year.

Cariba Co-led private sector support for DOE moves to address local power issues, including the efforts to upgrade power transmission facilities and the institution by Transco in the Pres area.

Perez had urged the Abonic and Cariba groups to end the conflict amount in support of the city's bid for business and investment expansion.

Ayala absorbs affiliate in Cebu

AYALA Corp. was given the go-signal by corporate regulators to absorb its wholly-owned Cebu-based subsidiary, Mandaue Primehotel Inc.

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) recently approved the merger between Ayala Corp. and Mandaue Primehotel, that called for the transfer of all assets and liabilities of the property firm to Ayala Corp.

Features said this is part of Ayala Corp.'s overall strategy to rationalize and consolidate Ayala's core businesses.

In the company's stockholder's meeting last year, Ayala Corp.'s reorganize of the assets of Mandaue Primehotel and PI Prime Properties Inc. was ratified "to allow better monitoring and relay creation."

As of December 2003, total assets of Ayala Corp. stood at P94.17 million. Total assets of Mandaue Primehotel or the other hand was at P57.8 million.

Mandaue Primehotel owns a 4,200-square-meter property in Mandaue City which it leases to its headquarters in Cebu.

Ayala Corp. earlier posted a 26-percent jump in net income to P1.1 billion in 2003 from P1.4 billion in 2002.

It also marked a return to profit in the fourth quarter after posting a bigger stake in Globe Telecom.

Elizabeth L. Sanchez

ABS-CBN to pursue listing of subsidiary in Singapore

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

BOMBARDIER television network ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp. is optimistic it can offset drops in its international programming sales as ABS-CBN Global in the Singapore stock market in the next few years as it firms up plans to boost the profitability of the subsidiary.

ABS-CBN chief financial officer Rudy Tenebroso said the Japan-controlled network has not shelved plans of a possible maiden public offering for ABS-CBN Global at the Stock Exchange of Singapore.

"We are not shelving the IPO (initial public offering). We are not yet qualified since there is a three-year net income requirement. We are just awaiting the three-year track record to see one lit," Tenebroso said.

Should its listing push through, ABS-CBN Global will join the likes of Philippine companies Jollibee, DMX and Petron's company which are already listed in Singapore.

Tenebroso explained that ABS-CBN Global's fiscal performance continues to show fresh growth in the last two years.

With the launch of ABS-CBN Europe last June, ABS-CBN Global has set to three consolidated profit.

He added that ABS-CBN aims to get a larger chunk of the investors in Filipino viewership, already surpassing 1.5 million Filipino viewers to date out of the estimated seven million overseas nationals.

"That is like a population size of 10 provinces. We'd like to double that in the next five years," Tenebroso said.

ABS-CBN Global's cable and television last year accounted for 6% percent of the parent company's total net sales.

Net sales for ABS-CBN Global expanded 12 percent to P2.37 billion from its 2000 from P1.81 billion the previous year.

Bulk of ABS-CBN Global's revenue is from subscription fees by its cable and direct-to-home (DTH) service. It is total 1.3 million viewership base. 51 percent are in North America.

An increase in DTH time by 15 percent in the second revenue for the company since a fourth TV channel was included in the lineup of DTH subscribers. Growth in subscribers, however, was tempered by lower installation revenue since the company shifted its prices to increase subscribers penetration rate.

GMA-7 sees 50% growth in net profit this year

GMA Network Inc. expects to surpass its 2003 net profit of P1.05 billion by 50 percent this year.

GMA senior vice president for corporate resources Felipe Tadeng said the network saw high ad revenue from its television and radio operations and from its international channel, which is set to be launched in the next few months.

GMA will also re-open its DMF to attract high frequency channel and start producing movies again this year.

The growth in net earnings last year was 162 percent or P608 million from the P402 million earned in 2002. The broadcast giant also increased its gross revenue by 48 percent to P6.24 billion from P4.21 billion last years.

Higher production costs and talent fees boosted its operating expenses by 23 percent.

GMA touted the higher production costs as the introduction of more "home-title shows." The network also set aside a higher budget for this year's programs.

Before interests and other charges, earnings stood at P2.26 billion or 74 percent higher than 2002.

The company said it was also optimistic it would live debt-free by the end of 2005.

Based on P. 06 net U.S., GMA vice president for finance, had said the company's total outstanding debt stood at P1 billion. Half of that amount comes this year and would be financed internally from operations. The other P500 million would fall due in 2005 and would also be paid on cash from operations.

Once debt-free by 2005, the company could raise additional capital from an initial public offering or through guaranty borrowings. The company said it was ready to offer its shares to the public but was waiting for stock market conditions to improve.

The network is controlled by three families—the Duavits and Stonehenge hold 15 percent each while the Gozon family owns 20 percent.

—Elizabeth L. Sanchez

JG Summit profit for 2003 steady at P2.3B-P2.4B

By Clarissa S. Batino

JG Summit Corp. controlled by the Gokongwei family has managed to keep its net profit last year steady at between P2.3 billion and P2.4 billion from P2.39 billion in 2002 despite higher expenses for its telecom and airline units.

A company official said earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization reached about P5.4 billion.

The year, the JG Summit official said the company was looking to bring in about P1 billion in net profit.

The official said that most of the major businesses managed to contribute to the profit although increased spending to expand Digital Telecommunications Philippines Inc. and Cebu Pacific pared down the gains from the other units.

Aside from telecom and airlines, JG Summit is engaged in food manufacturing through Universal Robina Corp., real estate and malls through Robinson's Land Corp., petrochemicals through JG Summit Petrochemical Corp., and textile manufacturing through Cebu Mactan.

An official noted that aside from increased expenditures, the company was hit by rising interest rates and a depreciating peso.

Digital posted a net loss of P721.8 million from Januarysto September last year as revenues from the fixed-line, data and internet services dropped.

James Go, chair of JG Summit, said that Digitel would spend $120 million to double the network capacity of its subsidiary Isontorre Tan Cellsclan. The funds would be raised from a blend of multilateral loans and other borrowings.

He said Sun Cellular was targeting to grow its subscriber base to 2 million this year from about 700,000 in 2003. Its first year of operations. The plunging peso is likely to vary in the red this year but officials hoped that it would at least break even in 2005.

Cebu Pacific also suffered a net loss of P19.6 million in the first three quarters, reversing a P239-million profit a year ago as travel slowed down due to the SARS scare.

The airline is planning to fly to Dubai on a regular basis and establish a Manila-Japan route as part of its regional expansion. Go, the fleet is Hong Kong-Delhi and to Seoul, Beijing, Shanghai, Osaka from Manila and Cebu. It also offers chartered flights to Xiamen and Guangzhou in China.

Last Thursday, JG Summit told its stockholders that it would issue P826 million worth of preferred shares to help finance an estimated P26 billion in capital expenditures for the year.

The bulk of the capital expenses would go to Sun Cellular as it could compete more aggressively with Globe and Smart whose subscriber base has exceeded 8 million and 12 million, respectively.

Some of the money the company plans to raise would go toward the facilities of the manufacturing arm and to construct new malls.

Universal Robina Corp. will start the construction of its P1.8-billion feed manufacturing plant in Vietnam later this year and will start selling its snack foods to the country next year.

Trading seen to remain weak

From page B1

Adding to the burden is the slight turnover in non-performing loans in January to 14.7 percent of total bank loans against 14.1 percent in December because of low loan growth.

"There is no major policy change in the near-low chart that would indicate some direction for the market. Our basic view is a consolidation phase. Banking sector there is getting an hope. Q1 be earnings growth. The thing else to interest rates, cost of capital it also to may threaten the upcoming stock values," the analyst said.

Other analysts said there may be some interest in Lopez companies given the recent government takeover of prime water distributor Maynilad Water Services Inc. and the resulting write-off of the Lopez' investments in the company.

Meralco, Maynilad's largest concessionaire amounting to P8 billion, the government stands to get a 61 percent stake in Maynilad. Metrobank, which supplies water to the service area of Metro Atlantic, was selected by a Pasig-based arbitration panel to pay the overdue account last year. Metro had later filed a petition in a local court seeking debt relief and corporate rehabilitation.

Benpres is controlled by the Lopez family which also has huge stakes in ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp., Manila Electric Co. and First Philippine Holdings Corp.

To evaluate the debt problem of Benpres and if it would impact on what is on equity for the company," Trans International's analyst said.

"But beyond that, financing for Benpres or access to debt markets for Lopez companies should ease up slightly since the Maynilad gets back more money," the analyst added. —Elizabeth L. Sanchez

GSIS bank board members at odds over Puyat shares

By Michelle V. Rosario

BOARD members of the GSIS family Bank are at odds over the issue of whether to return to the Puyat estate millions of pesos worth of shares that the bank is allegedly withholding illegally.

The Puyat estate consists of businessman Jose Puyat, brother of the late Sen. Gil Puyat Jr.

A source privy to the matter said board chair Sanchez Ali, president Marven Catalan and director Eduardo De Los Angeles want the shares returned to the Puyats, saying the bank has no right over the withheld shares. Five other board members are either for delaying the return of the shares until further study or opposed to returning the shares, the source said.

In a recent meeting of the 13-man board, the three in favor of the return of the shares were narrowed to five opposed the move. The other board members were absent.

The contested 360,717 shares of various companies were pledged by the late senator and his associates from 1980 to 1981 to then Rural Savings Bank (renamed Cooperative Bank) in 2004 and it now GSIS family Bank) to secure P5.1 million worth of loans for the operation of firms belonging to the Puyat estate.

When the senator died in 1992, the administrators of the Puyat estate published an advertisement calling creditors to make formal claims.

Cooperative Bank failed to file any claim on these pledged shares.

The Puyat estate said it was not able to settle the obligation because it was not aware of the loan until recently.

Citing provisions of the Civil Code, the Puyats said they surrendered the rightful owners of the shares because failure to foreclose pledged assets within 10 years after the loans fell due took away the right of a creditor to take possession of the assets.

"The Puyats want the shares returned not because they are interested in the money, but because they want to keep the good name of their father and to clarify once and for all also the real owner of the shares is (now) returned," they told the gatherings of the shares deemed as shareable distributions," said David So, a representative of the Puyats.

So said the Puyats only want to recover the 69.01 % shares registered there. It is under the name of the old senator, he said the heirs were preparing that the rest of the over 300,000 shares be given to a charitable organization of the GSIS family Bank's choice.

Lawyer Hadie Sanares, speaking for the Puyats, said the family was set to file corruption charges against the bank's board members if they would fail to return the shares within the week.

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Time for a consumer revolt

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Howard C. Gutierrez

OVER the past few months, the Filipino consumer has been hysterical black and blue by high prices. It is time for the consumer to fight back and initiate a revolt.

First, it was the price of chicken. Last Christmas, the price soared to an unheard of P160 per kilo. This was apparently the result of an agreement between the cartel of chicken eaters on one hand and a huge consumer watch group. Derailed by one of the biggest chicken eaters in the country, no less, on the other. The pact was forged in the air conditioned confines of a government office and was anchored on the 40-percent tax on imported chicken; tax computed to 20 per cent on imported powder).

The dastardly plot was foiled when intrepid smugglers landed in Batangas a shipload of Thai chicken parts in all-time convenient. Customs Commissioner Rey Bernardo swore on his honor to chase chicken legs all over South ern Tagalog and Metro Manila.

Then, it was pork. In a meeting in the air-conditioned confines of the same government agency hog raisers and traders agreed to raise the price. There, the traders accused the raisers of charging barn gate prices that were more than what was agreed upon. The raisers declared a "pig holiday" and did not supply hogs to Metro Manila for one day. It was now with all the subsidy of P120 a kilo.

Finally, the jeepney-magnet their sights up began to jeans think demand for higher fares. As in the past, the jeepney owners could not quite pull off their unionized tantrum-wide strike, but there were reports of thousands of passengers who could not get a ride for hours.

The Filipino consumer has been battered enough. It is time to fight back and riot in revolt. Remember, our consumers have the upper hand. Where there are no consumers, there will be no suppliers. Let us wield our consumers sovereignty.

Let us boycott chicken and pork. After all, they are not staple foods. I love fried chicken but I can live without it. Dinengdeng na mora is one of my favorites, but there is always fish available. As to pork, many of us are on a low-fat diet anyway. Our Muslim brothers go on through life without eating pork. A Hindman like me can go on for weeks on living and all those other nourishing Indian cereals in thick coconut milk.

Let us consider the vulnerability of our arrogant suppliers. When a chicken is 45 days old, it has to be sold. Otherwise, the ratio starts losing money. The rate of increase in weight (or loss) gives for the increase in feed consumption. The ratio is one with logs. When the weight of a hog reaches 120 kilos, the point of diminishing return has been reached. The rate of increase in weight slows down while the rate of feed consumption continues to go up. The operator of a fleet of jeepneys may have the money to ride him over during a strike, but his drivers cannot afford to miss even a day's wages.

What if we consumers take a couple of weekdays from our annual vacation leaves, and just stay home? Anyway, by the end of the month, school will be out, and the children will be home. Spread the subsidy day watching Cartoon Network with the kids.

Nobody takes a ride in a jeepney or bus. Nobody takes his car out of the garage. Nobody goes to the palengke or the shopping malls, to the movies or to the park. Metro Manila will be completely shut down. With no demand, those high chicken and pork prices would hold up. And those jeepney operators will have a healthier respect for their passengers.

Will some activist women's group, say Gabriela, sound the call? Protesting against high consumable prices is right down their alley.

Else, fellow consumers? We have nothing to lose but high prices!

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6. Election of Directors including Independent Directors
7. Election of Auditors and Fixing of Their Remuneration
8. Consideration of such other business as may properly come before the meeting
9. Adjournment

Atty. Co. Secretary

BUSINESS Monday
Business Features Editor
Margie Quesada-Espina

Addressing this stink called pork barrel

By Dennis M. Arroyo
Contributor

If it's the weapon of traditional politicians to secure their patronage maneuvers. It is the source of wrong spending priorities and much corruption. It is simply called pork barrel, or more formally known, now as the Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF). The money is provided for the Congress members and Senators who disburse it to their constituents.

The PDAF does not necessarily result to total government use down it enters its budget. If the major congressmen-pork generator set political deals, the money flows direct to favored barangays through the public works department. That is, the barangays that supported the winning congressmen during the elections are given priority. The others just get promises.

Wrong spending priorities

As explained in a past article, the politics of pork barrel leads to warped spending. Some Congressmen are known for cooking infrastructure projects where elections are getting near. Suddenly alot of road-building is being done.

Projects are lacking half-baked. For example, a road is being built in a barangay during one term. Thereafter opposing politicians win in the next election. So he starts building roads in other preferred barangays even without finishing the first.

Corrupted projects

Greatest drain see most rampant in infrastructure, and elevating by politicians is said to follow this procedure. The major congressmen already has favored contractors, and he passes on the names to coaches for the public works department. Even though the list is short, the contractor gives him an "SOP" (cash). The politicians get the money after the contractor is paid or within for it during election campaign season.

He told, such cheating results to expensive highways that are short on length, width, or quality.

Vote-buying

Flashy pesky in turn feeds the phenomenon of buying votes. During national elections, the major congressmen dangles money over pork-funded projects.

Projects do not really click for national campaigns. The going rate for dry season depending on the economy. If the candidate can range from about of P500 per hamlet, a high of P1,000.

What can be done to address the stink that is pork barrel? Here is a wide list of options, some more feasible than others.

Lessons from abroad

Learn from other nations. The United States used to have pork barrel; it is an American institution. Today it has faded away to the Philippines should learn from the US. Other countries may be able to share how they removed their own kinds of pork barrel.

Adjust the sides for politicians. Perhaps, it would be better to hike their pay rather than give them pork barrel. In Japan and China, the local officials don't have pork barrel, but they enjoy generous salaries. The cost of raising executive salaries is quite small compared to the loss due to pork barrel.

To the local plan

All pork barrel funds should go to the local development plans. It may be all right to retain pork barrel as long as the funds click to the development plan and feed the budget for the area. Perhaps the PDAF should be decentralized proportionately to the districts.

Remove congressmen and senators from the development councils. The Local Government Code includes the Congressman or his representative as a member of the development councils. There are represented already even in the barangay development councils.

Changing the law

If Charter Change eventually pushes through, it would be good to insert a clear-cut division between the Executive and the legislative. At present people here with overlapping of functions...the legislator wants to implement projects, when that is the job of the executive.

Amend the Local Government Code. This cuts to the spirit of the above measure, but is too radical. The different leagues can issue a resolution to amend the Local Government Code to come up with real decentralization. Congressmen will just focus on legislation.

Compromises

One admits that it is hard to remove pork barrel, because the House and the Senate, who make the decisions, see the public find benefit from the PDAF. So half-measures may lead to at least partial success. For example, there can an initiative among Mak congressmen to remove funding for pork barrel while retaining the Representatives' power to choose projects in their provinces. It is a form of compromise and it can lead to the full phase-out of the pork barrel.

Fully amend pork barrel as a fallback public issue, advocates should explain to the people that pork barrel leads to corruption and ruining money for vote-buying. If it's a mass-based cause, Mindanaoing and even the Congressmen will listen.

Resolutions to remove the PDAF can start the process. They should come from development councils, the various leagues and local government units, signal are campaign can collect millions of voices to fight this menace from be

IPP offers incentives to new industries

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE BOARD OF Investments approved 2004 Investment Priorities Plan that fleshed up incentives for new businesses including medical tourism, environment protection services and petrochemicals.

Prepared by the Board of Investments, the IPP is an annual plan that determines priority economic activities and the corresponding products and services entitled to incentives.

Trade Secretary Cesar V. Purisima, who also sits on BOI chair, said last week that there was great potential in the medical tourism business.

"We want to develop medical tourism since our health care service industry provides quality service at competitive rates not only in Asia but worldwide," Purisima said.

Purisima had earlier talked of promoting the country as a world destination of medical services.

He noted that the aging of populations in developed countries was creating opportunities for the Philippines in market in medical expertise and related services.

He also said last week that the 2004 IPP encourages businesses to install vital facilities that will help preserve the environment.

These include sorting and measuring services for industrial and institutional sources of air and water pollutants and other related services for machinery and equipments.

"We want to further develop the country's packaging facilities that use high technology and brand-new equipments. These are vital to some sectors, especially the food industry," Purisima said.

He added that incentives are again being offered to petrochemical ventures such as naphtha crackers and polystyrene plants, which produce raw materials for the plastics industry.

Taiwanese bathroom firm expands production capacity

BATHROOM Ceramic maker Hocheng Philippines Corp. is investing $5.5 million or P308 million to double the production capacity of its factory in Cavite, a company official said.

Hocheng vice president Steve Chien said in a press briefing that the company's plant in the First Cavite Industrial Estate would start operating on increased capacity by May.

Chien also said the company sold P850 million worth of BCC branded fixtures last year, an increase of 18 percent from P720 million in 2002.

"Our sales figures for 2003 is a record in our triple years of operation," the executive said. "We hope to post even higher numbers with the expansion of production capacity."

"With increased production, we believe we can sell a total of P1.1 billion worth of fixtures in 2004," Chien added.

The plant used to produce 700,000 pieces of ceramic toilet bowls, water tanks and lavatories a year.

The would go up to a million pieces this year and reach 1.4 million pieces in 2005 when the expanded facility begins operating at full capacity.

Chien added that the capacity expansion would mean a similar growth in the company's workforce from 550 employees last July to about 900.

Hocheng's 16-hectare facility in Cavite is Taiwan-based Hocheng Group's (HCG) production hub.

"Locally made BCC products are well accepted in (16) countries where we are present, including the United States and Canada," he said.

Chien said Hocheng last year had the largest share in the local bathroom fixtures market at 33 percent. Ronnel W. Domingo

Rural banks urged to enter microfinance

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE RURAL Bankers Association of the Philippines has urged its members to extend financing to micro-entrepreneurs.

In a briefing last Friday, RBAP said it was promoting the Microenterprise Access to Banking Services (MABS) program, a joint effort with the USAID which was piloted several in Mindanao and have good results.

The MABS program aims to expand the number of participant bank units to 180, including new banks in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao and conflict areas of Mindanao.

It also seeks to increase the number of micro-loan clients served by MABS to at least 57,500 and micro-deposittors to 200,000.

The loan size averages at P12,000 to P15,000 but the banks' loans were as low as P5,000 as the aim of the program.

Unlike other microfinance lending models like the Grameen strategy which focuses on group borrowers, MABS program deputy chief Melina Agabin said the approach applies to both group and individual lenders.

"There is no one-size-fits-all product. The banks can introduce their own products," Agabin said.

The 80/60 approach relies on market research—done through area mapping, data gathering and market surveys rather than past references—to seek eligible borrowers.

It banks on micro-borrowers with existing businesses who can afford to pay back their loans.

Target borrowers are wet market vendors, small retailers, cottage industries and manufacturers.

"We also target enterprises that do processing because these are the ones with the potential to employ more people," she said.

The MABS program was pioneered in Mindanao in 1998, with 26 banks embracing the micro-financing model.

The banks using the 80/60 model currently derive an average of 30-37 percent of their portfolio for microfinance.

Resort owners decry lack of gov't support

By Eleanor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

BORACAY ISLAND, Aklan—Despite the increasing number of tourist arrivals, resort owners here said the government was not doing enough to attract more foreign visitors.

"Few people in other countries know about Boracay," said Henry Chuaney, chair of the board of directors of the Boracay Foundation Inc., composed of about 140 owners of resorts, restaurants and other firms on the island.

He said the government should allocate more funds for promotional campaigns to reach potential tourists from other countries.

"Big markets such as China remained untapped," he told the business.

Chuaney owns the 85-room Boracay Regency Beach Resort, one of the high-end resorts on the island.

"Many first-time visitors here only know about the place from their friends," said BFI president Lutz Schertz.

Bruce Gillespie, a tourist from Colorado, said only a few Americans know about the island.

"That's unfortunate because I've been to 60 countries and Boracay has the most beautiful beach and atmosphere," he added.

The island resort, considered the country's premier tourist destination, also faces competition from tourist destinations in Palawan, Cebu and Bohol, said Salmon.

Tourism regional director Edwin Trompeta, however, said the private sector should take the lead in the promotion campaign because the government has limited resources.

He said that in Hong Kong and Singapore, the promotion campaigns are spearheaded by privately run tourism promotion boards.

Tourist arrivals have increased over the past six years mainly due to the significant increase in domestic tourists and Korean visitors.

Tourist arrivals reached 229,424 last year, 12.6% percent higher than 386,702 visitors in 2002.

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How and do you share?

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Image Communication

DOF recommends hike in transport income taxes

By Michelle V. Nuevo

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance is pushing for legislation to increase the tax on the income of the operators of public land transportation, saying that the current base for taxation is obsolete.

The move, aimed at increasing revenue collection from the sector, was requested in three bills' separations from bus, jeepney and taxi operators.

Under the Tax Code, public transport operators are levied a 3-percent tax on gross income.

The Tax Code, however, still uses 1970s' fare levels as the base in computing their income.

The Tax Code sets the minimum quarterly gross income that operators must declare at P2,400 for taxpayers plying Metro Manila, P1,200 for taxpayers plying provincial routes, and P1,600 for taxis in Metro Manila.

It also sets the minimum quarterly gross income for operators of tourist with a maximum capacity of 36 passengers at P3,600.

The minimum income for operators of buses with a capacity of over 36 passengers is set at P7,200.

These income levels were based on the minimum fare levels in the late 1970s of 20 centavos for jeepneys and 40 centavos for taxis.

The minimum jeepney fare now stands at P8, while minimum taxi fare is P25.

The DOF is studying by how much it will increase the minimum gross income requirements by. DOF operators, but the previously proposed revenue regulations recommended that the amounts be raised by more than 10 times.

The following are the DOF's proposed minimum gross income levels: P52,400 for operators of jeepneys plying Metro Manila; P14,000 for operators of jeepneys plying provincial routes; P42,000 for operators of taxis plying Metro Manila and public buses with a maximum capacity of 36 passengers; P84,000 for operators of buses with a capacity of more than 36 passengers; taxis and P28,800 for operators of taxis plying provincial areas.

DA scores Australia on banana decision

By Christine A. Gaplican

THE AGRICULTURE department has criticized the Australian government for backtracking on its decision to allow the export of Philippine bananas.

"A month after it said it would allow our export of Cavendish bananas, Biosecurity Australia reversed its earlier recommendation," said Agriculture Secretary Luis P. Lorenzo Jr. on Friday.

Lorenzo said that was "very disappointing."

Biosecurity Australia manager Wary Harwood last Wednesday said a statistical error was found in the August Risk Analysis of Philippine bananas.

The threat that some quarantine measures detailed in the IRA would have to be reassessed and strengthened.

Harwood told Maria Aracely Alburero, Manila's agricultural attaché to Canberra, however, that the changes in the quarantine measures were "minor" and "insignificant."

"Harwood could not publicly announce what the changes are until after the IRA panel has made the final recommendations. With the way things are going at Biosecurity Australia, we are aware of the full integrity of the process considering that such basic lapses could occur," Lorenzo said.

In a report sent to the DA central office, Alburero said DA had released a memorandum explaining what the error was and alerted all stakeholders that as a result of the error, the biosecurity agency would be making additions to the revised IRA in the coming weeks.

DTI to focus on Sorsogon pili industry

SORSOGON CITY—The Department of Trade and Industry will focus on pili production to boost the province's food industry.

Soraya Maluya, DTI Industry and Investment Division chief, said the agency would help pili processors in the areas of production development, upgrading, packaging and labeling of pili products to make them more competitive here and abroad.

Maluya estimated that some P10-million to P20-million in processed pili went to DTI-assisted processors in 2003.

"That's not even one-fourth of leading transactions in pili," Maluya said, as he revealed that there are still many traders and processors who have not registered with the DTI.

He said the 56 processors that registered in 2003 have grown to 88.

Pili Executives swanned, technically a fruit according to Dewey Fernandez's book "Fruits of the Philippines," is considered the "high commodity champion" in Sorsogon and was identified by the Department of Agriculture (DA) as the "flagship commodity" for Bicol.

DA records showed that in 2003, pili production in the Bicol Region reached an estimated 4,540 mts or 70.2 percent of the national figure.

In 1992, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources reported that the Bicol Region supplied 92 percent of the national production estimate, most of which came from Sorsogon, prompting the National Economic Development Authority to declare Sorsogon as the commodity champion for pili.

The DA has conducted a pili dispersal program since 1992, through the Sorsogon Provincial Pili Development Council.

Some independent processors have successfully sold pili to Japan and the United States, according to Maluya.

DTI focuses its help on those who organize and given them the opportunity to join trade fairs where they can meet more customers. —Emile Enrome Gamos, PDI Intern

Taiwan official calls for cut in bureaucracy

DAVAO CITY—A visiting Taiwanese government executive urged city officials to cut red tape to encourage investors to put up businesses in the city.

Chin-Horng Wu, chief of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (Teco), said during a recent visit that too much red tape drives away investors.

"[Businessmen] are chasing time. For the investor, time is money, how to optimize competitive capability now often explains dependency on time," he said.

He said that aside from cutting red tape, officials should also define a clearer investor-lee package for investors and make the city's offices more efficient.

"How many can (a) free? Are there incentives on electricity? Or what are the other investment?" Wu said.

Currently, the Davao City Investment and Promotion Center (DCIPC) offers standard tax holidays on mayor's permit fee, business permits, building permits and real property taxes depending on the nature and size of the investment.

"It should also improve its competitive edge and the best areas (would be) agriculture, food processing and technology," Wu said.

He said Taiwanese investors are keen on helping the city government improve its food processing and agri-business sectors.

They are focusing on the processing of mango, banana and pineapples, which have high export potential.

To improve competitiveness, Wu said the city should also increase its pool of skilled manpower.

"You need education because talented people will result in increased competitiveness," he said. —Joel B. Escovilla, PDI Mindanao Bureau

LIFESTYLE

Editor: Chato Bunal-Asensio
Associate Editor: Lisa Zuñiga

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Thank you for the music!

The San Miguel Chorale, Las Piñas bamboo organ festival and Pasig music festival leave music lovers asking for more

By Antonio C. Hila
Contributor

THE SAN Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra and Philippine Chorale

IN THE haze of the current political campaign, the performing arts in music has likewise reached a feverish festive pitch.

The single indicator that musical performances will remain for all seasons. The ever-burgeoning music lovers have kept the musical performing arts alive and its being.

At the CCP Main Theater, the San Miguel Foundation for the Performing Arts proudly showcased the crackling performance of the San Miguel Chorale and the San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra under the meticulous baton of Ludovico V. Maliwanag, one of the country's leading choral conductors.

Aptly titled "Kaisamang," the concert was basically a choral presentation that featured Filipino as well as dozen compositions written in the post-colonial idiom and which underscored this author point of view. These compositions, creating a primarily religious flavor, were chosen from the Pentecost related to God's other name as the "other voice."

Perhaps in keeping with the spirit of Vatican II that had finally recognized the logic of keeping the liturgy close to the traditions of particular groups of people, contemporary Philippine and Asian liturgical music relies mainly on the use of the country's rich ethnic and native music of tradition.

Re-inclined, liturgical music achieves relevance only if it is enhanced out of the musical environment of the people who find shaped its ethos. The language becomes clear and intelligible. It integrates, rather than alienates.

A cappella

The entire first half of the program was rendered almost a cappella, enriched only by a minimal use of Asian or Philippine ethnic instruments. In some numbers, vocal rendition did not follow the sensibility of the Western bel canto but employed the Asian manner of vocal inclination—at times guttural, high-pitched or accentuation, as the case may be.

Glissering, which allows sliding of tones in flexible rhythms, was likewise very much evident. Droning, enduring rhythm created by the ostinato was evident in different kinds of music, and although GarCanz—celebrated, for instance, by the use of pentatonic scale—were also much in evidence.

A work was rendered in a bilingual by Liberatore. These were shown in Francisco Feliciano's "Ikaw ang Awit," Raphelito Zacho's "Hagonoy-Pahiyas-Aginaldo-Jule." Recitals sung Sacil, "Alleluya" and "Glory upon to," Ave Verum Dido's "Inuli-y-Cruzul Pupulan," Ryan Cayabyab's "Pangkuan Awagdon," Christian Isaac Tumacly's "Indigong" Indito Rubio Sinaugsabol's "Pinyanuan Sinaulan," Bernito Gregory Aurelio Sagandi's "Silpo Pag-Ibig," and Amy Amper Bagay's "Kalayaan" from "The Redemption."

Francisco Feliciano and Amy Unday's works as opening and final numbers evoked a unity outcome feeling of high spirituality. Feliciano work quietly invoked a prayer participation and simple, meditatively voiced work that relied on superb rendition and tonal blending, the choir being lined up to encircle the audience from the stage to the lower.

Bagay, on the other hand, modulated the liturgy with a vibrant, rhythmically exciting work that spanned a dynamic, wide range. Conductor Mike was noted as the high point in finding the choir to vibrant heights.

Bravos

The second part showcased the works of Ryan Cayabyab, one of the country's most versatile composers. Rather, his setting of St. Francis of Assisi's prayer for peace, "Penghawa Senggiba," which besides would permanent, was received with a thunderous applause, spiced with shouts of bravos.

"Mitot 2000" and "Kyrie Eleison" from "Paraw Ilaw," with lyrics by Bienvenido Lumbera, as well as a host of songs like "Buong Buwalan si Kapitan Sa," "Mayon Mo," and "Pandan," which were played with the San Miguel Philharmonic orchestra, offered most listening pleasure. Here, Feliciano clothed piano with impressive results, coordinating both the choir and orchestra.

"Mitot 2000" is also second in the "other voice." Synthesizing the text into the traditional Mitot, but was indeed rooted in the contemporary idioms, which revealed sensitivity to native musical forms.

Unlike the Western model, the Mitot was not written to highlight an intermediate display of vocal virtuosity. Cayabyab's music was direct and straightforward as in the "it incantamenta" in the "Gerda," the very core of the Christian faith, which he weaved in a majestic manner that struck a close resemblance to all grand Masses created in the Western tradition.

The pop section was a bit uneven. This was the test of Cayabyab. He simply salute this composer, who is incomparable in versatility.

TURN TO C2

SOME Mangyans in their new home

MT resident with the Mangyans

TEACHER Rebecca Jolly

Lessons from the Mangyans

ALL4ART

Ines Zobel Jr.

MY MOTHER first met the Iraya Mangyan people on the mountain slopes of Mindoro. In her own words, the Mangyans were dressed so unusually that "they seemed like an apparition."

As she approached them, they started running.

According to the CCF Encyclopedia of Philippine Art, Mangyan is the collective name of seven ethnolinguistic groups which live in the highlands of Mindoro. These groups are the Iraya, Alangan, Tadyawan, Hanunoo, Buhid, Tau Buhid and Bangon.

When my parents built a rest house in Northern Mindoro it was the Iraya Mangyan that they encountered. "Iraya" means "people from upstream."

Over the years the different Mangyan groups have had an uneasy relationship with the other people of Mindoro. Often misconceptions and generalizations have arisen on both sides.

My mother innocently got entangled with one of the racial stereotypes when she was told that if she wanted to befriend the Mangyan she should offer them tattlines.

Can you just picture it? My mother running down the beach, arms akimbo, hands filled with cans of sardines shouting, "Hoy! Hoy! I am a friend!" (Tsa! he affectionately sighs. "I'll never live that one down.")

Eventually my mom managed to get through to her new friends. With the help of translators she learned that they lived very close to the mountains.

The visits the mountains were very exciting to my mother. She would take her own friends on any occasion she could. Her first visit gave her a really terrible weekend! We laugh about it now but it was a harsh lesson. And it was a journey my mother would make many times over the years. Often her treks were quite hazardous.

Courageous

Even sadly my mother would meet Behoyo Pawanteros, one of the most courageous and dedicated teachers I have ever known.

This is her story: In 1980, having just become a teacher in Puerto Galera, she was sent by her supervisor to teach the Mangyans. No one wanted the job as it was a hike-and-ride up the mountains. She would start at 6 a.m., equipped with two books for herself. There was no money for pages or writing materials. She would teach Grade 1, 2, 3, however she could.

After four days, she considered leaving. Because at leaving to take on this job. She told herself that she had not come this far in her career to go and teach in the mountains.

Yet, it did not take too much time before her attitude felt was to be dedicated to these wonderful people. She says it was only when she met the Mangyans that she understood what kindness, generosity and selflessness were all about. She felt if was the Mangyans who were teaching her the important lessons of life. Before it would take from Monday to Friday up to the mountains to begin the long climbs. The number of students soon were regular as they, too, had to cross great distances to reach the school. Many times the morning lessons would be blown up by bubbling a fire to dry themselves from the rain. The children would have one meal a day, usually lunch. Yet they wouldn't hesitate to share what they had with teacher Rebecca and each other.

She smiles as she thought they would call Iraya one day but she would be part of their need as it was such a nice community. It would never cross their minds to hide some newly acquired luxury.

Rebecca also remembers being taught the wonders and miracles of the forest. Much of the Mangyans' medicines were obtained from roots and leaves. However, as she did some that, sadly, her words had learning difficulties which were probably the result of poor nutrition.

In 1987, Rebecca married Juan Dayondonza, a social worker. Juan, too, would spend many hours dedicated to the Mangyans. In 1987, my mother came into the scene. Books, papers, pencils and notebooks began were brought to Godly-Bay (who's the boat?).

My mother started pumping the water from the river to their communities. A past project with the Lions. She took a doctor and a nurse to check them all. At one point, Rebecca was overtaken by grief. She had been advised that just going up the mountain would induce delivery. Her pregnancy entered its ninth month! When my mother found out she immediately took action. Rebecca was found herself in Makati Medical with my mother urging hands for. Of course a Caesarean delivery had to be initiated. Had the pregnancy lasted one longer, Rebecca would have lost her life.

Caught in the crossfire

Sometime around 1990, there was a less-than-friendly encounter between the NPA and the military. The Mangyans were caught in between. Their livelihood was uncertain and their safety is ridden with bullets. Frightened, the Mangyans went down and lived around Rebecca and Juan's house in the lowlands. Rebecca felt she had to encourage them to get back up to their own their way of life. They would pick up during the day but would be down by nightfall. Nothing could persuade them to live up in the mountains again. My mother soon convinced me (what to do, she). Three batches of land for the Mangyans to call their own. She also brought in the Sisters of Charity of St. Anne. A school and clinic were set up. My mother persuaded the nuns to respect the Mangyan religion.

One morning, though, the nuns came being baptized on the beach by another Christian group. She insisted that no more people were interested in converting the Mangyans!

The Mangyan lovingly live-off-mail, don't appreciate our kungas. They also gather what they need from the forest.

They made beautiful baskets. My mom became their top sales agent. (Read my next Monday to find out about these baskets!)

There was the time when my mother was advised to teach her Mangyan friends to fish. Fish was a good source of the protein so lacking in their diets. And by that time, they were living close to the sea. My mother bought them boats and fishing equipment. Rest of course is history. The Mangyans' mountain-based culture was completely erased.

The members of the Iraya Mangyan community have changed my mother's life as she has changed theirs. She has come to be part of many of their joyful events. Their joy and sorrow. She has known and with their births and their deaths. She has helped look for missing children. She once intervened to save the legs of an elder accused men from being cut off. She has helped many people find jobs and happily witness when they sell their off her of their success—not the way other proud parent!

Through all of this, my mother, like Rebecca, insists that she has learned so much from the Mangyans. She has learned that there are treasures in the forest; it is not easy to teach its laws how to fish and that one must always be shared.

When we ask her why she helps the Mangyans, she answers very simply. "They are our neighbors. It is our duty to help them." Happily the Mangyans also have their own kind words. One of their elders, Ka Juan, had this to say: "If there is a God (maybe he has too confused by all the attempts to Christianize him), your parents are like honored gods."

I wonder how many wonderful stories are out there about the rewards of working for the most neglected sectors of our society.

For questions and comments, e-mail her at lifestyle@mail.inq.ph or address letters to Filipinas Heritage Library, Ateneo Ave., Ayala Triangle, Makati City.

Mosaics on display

ARTISTS and good pals Cristhes Cruz Cepeda, 28, and Babe Dungcas Arroyo, 22, would like to introduce Filipinos to an alternative way of appreciating art.

For them, mosaics have rich, arcane—the combination of tiles, shapes and colors can make any flat surface a sculptural encounter. The infinite number of cut, cut and degrees of transparencies seem superlatives find no other medium can.

The artists offer a wide product line of home décor like vases, bowls, picture frames, mirrors and furniture fixtures as well as architectural pieces such as tables, murals and floor arrangements for the corporate client.

They can also design glass tiles for their mosaics and also mirrors, broken glass, stained glass and ceramic tiles to create a rich and striking pattern.

Their mosaic works are on exhibit at The Palms Country Club, Filinvest, Alabang, Muntinlupa, until March 28.

"LALOONI #Banana," by Babe Arroyo (Medium: glass tiles)

Thank you for the music!

From page B1

Las Piñas festival

At Las Piñas last Feb. 27, the 20th International Bamboo Organ Festival was launched with much fanfare.

As in the past, the festival centered on the Bamboo Organ and choral renditions. Among those who graced these talents to list the baroque music specialist master Jennifer Bermudez soloists Rachelle Ocvallos, soprano Janet Bobis-Inocencio, mezzo soprano, Ruth Soliman de Angel, tenor, and Andrew Fernando, baritone the Ateneo Chamber Choir, the Philippine Chamber Choir and the Festival Ensemble and Jonathan Velasco conductor.

The festival's artistic director, Delfi L. Reyes, ensured the extraordinary quality of the program. The festival itself has been going for almost three decades now.

Philippine-German Month

At Paco Park, the 29th-year celebration of the Philippine-German Month was celebrated last February.

The third concert, "Strings and Wind Harmony" featured the Trio in E-Flat major for piano, violin and horn, Op.40 by Brahms and Quintet for clarinet and strings in A Major, K581 by Mozart.

The chamber presentation all the more underscored the beauty of the venue for all lovers of intimacy. The event would not have been possible were it not for the efforts of The Federal Republic of Germany.

Rudel Gutierrez, horn, Oscar C. Yatco, violin, and Elena del Rosario-Villanueva, piano were the featured artists for the first leaders. Adel Tan, violinist, Nedine Archer, Mary Grace Manzano, violin 2, Joan Santos, viola, and Geronimo Z. Mateo, violoncello, were the performers in the second and last number.

Pasig Music Festival

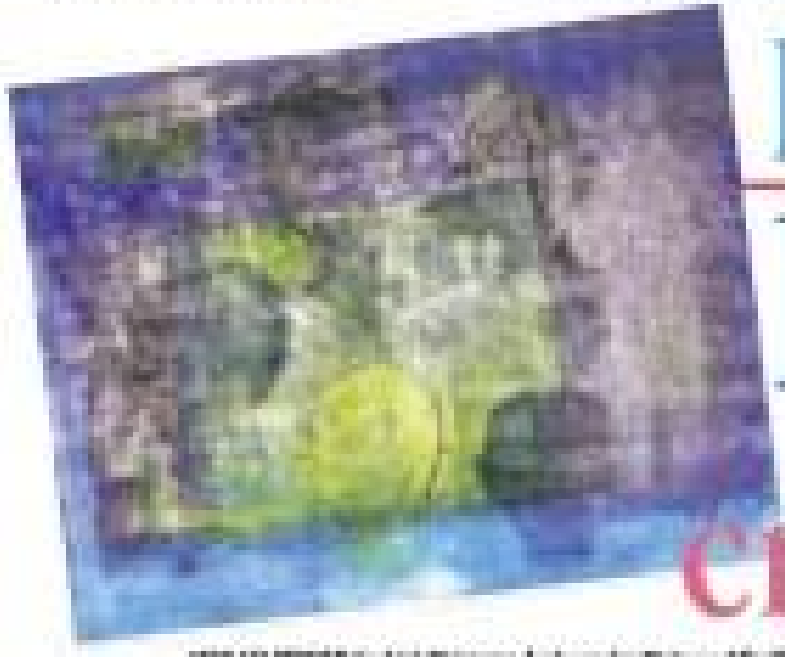
At the Pasig City Museum, Pablo Tiamzon's Summer Music Festival has made classical music alive. Now on its third year, the festival is also making its presence felt in the countryside.

Taking center stage in one of the concerts was young violinist Leonardo Santos Jr. who forged a contrapuntal collaboration with guitarist Greg Zuniega. The highlight of their performance was an engaging rendition of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E Minor, Op.64.

We hope the best for the positively gifted young violinist whose dream it is to continue his studies abroad.

LIFESTYLE

Envoy of creativity



"ENLIGHTENED," which Philippine Ambassador Mohamad Taufik painted after a pilgrimage to Mecca that "changed my life completely," will open its exhibit today.

By James P. Ong
Contributor

FLORA and fauna is the main theme in Malaysian Ambassador Mohamad Taufik's art exhibit, which opens today at his residence in Dasmariñas Village, Makati City. There are 62 works on display—"one for each year of my life."

How can the hard-working diplomat still find time to paint? "Painting is my passion. I really want to be a full-time artist," he confesses. Taufik is drawn to his canvas either first thing in the morning, after his prayers, or just before he retires to bed. "I'll paint maybe 10 or 20 minutes each time. I am a very impatient person so I can't stay doing one thing for too long. The longest I ever paint is an hour and a half."

The bulk of the works on display were done in Illinois, from the time he was first posted here in 2000. While he has always loved nature to paint in his previous posting in Brunei, it is here that he has become prolific, surrounded by his well-tended garden where he grows orchids, and his beautiful pets. Bantam chickens which now numbers almost 50. The latter, he says, will be the subject of his next exhibit.

He is also inspired by his pocket garden back in Kuala Lumpur, and finds serenity by driven some of his plants in "Dream Garden," an interesting mix of abstract-impressionist oil painted on canvas using dried—Bahasa plants, calla lilies, ferns, tulips and anthuriums, among everything else.

Easily one of the most coveted pieces, however, will be "Seven Goddess," a large acrylic and pastel rendition of seven kinds of orchids. "Orchids are a big thing here. I've been to the orchid shows," he shares.

Personal work

The most personal work on display and which Taufik believes is his best work is "Enlightened," a semi-abstract piece with bold brush on the canvas. The sun in the center is his own head, which he showed in 2000 after completing a 40-day pilgrimage to Mecca that changed my life completely. It gave me back my faith. I started back to God and religion, and wanted to have faith again in people."

BACK TO TOP

"TORSO," one of four pieces in the exhibit celebrating the human body is a reminder of the importance of fitness, says Taufik.

"Wonders with a Leg" was made after the artist started going to the gym last year. He says he is now "addicted" to bodybuilding.

Malaysian Ambassador Mohamed Taufik communes with the Muses in the thick of diplomacy

Envoy of creativity

Hi! "Green Goddess" (background), Ambassador Taufik paints several kinds of orchids in detail. He grows several elephant ear in his well-tended garden.

AMBASSADOR Taufik says his Banaue children, now about 60 in number, will surely be the subject of a future exhibit.

From page 23

Although Taufik has been painting since he was a child ("My teacher in first year high school wrote in my report card that I was a budding artist, but my father discouraged me. I have an engineer, however.") and was even the "resident artist" in his university dormitory back in London ("We were all foreign students and I would paint the posters for all the student parties Bahasian's, Cleaners Ball, Indian New Year"). There was almost a decade when he put a stop to his creative pursuit.

"I wasn't inspired to do anything. I was depressed because of my divorce in 1986, deaths in the family and many personal problems I couldn't overcome," he explains. After his pilgrimage, he felt well again and thus "Enlightened" was born.

"Enlightened" will open the exhibit, to be attended by guest of honor Gina de Venecia, whose Congressional Spouses Foundation will receive part of the proceeds. "I chose their Bineon Per Children project to Alabang because children are very close to my heart, especially since I don't have my own," he explains.

Figurative

Taufik's newest works, however, have a more striking subject—human figures. "An Arm and a Leg" is his entry take on the gym culture, and his assessment of what it takes to get physically fit. Unknown to many, the Malaysian ambassador has been religiously going to the gym since last year and has lost pounds since.

There are also two nude works, "a reminder of the importance of fitness," all of his works are suffused with bright colors, a reflection of his current state of mind. "I'm very happy and optimistic. I can never paint dull colors," he says.

Upon seeing his paintings, Taufik was encouraged by his local artist friends to put up a show here and since he already had enough pieces, culled from the past six years, he said yes. In the past weeks he has been busy signing his works, bringing them to framers and thinking up titles. And he's very excited. "It's a dream come true to have my own show," he smiles.

His artist's reception for "Recent Works by Mohamed Taufik" will be held today at 5 p.m. Public viewing dates are from March 23 to 28, 2:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Call Flor or Rafaela at 8179501.

Sanso's Brittany landscapes at Joaquin

GALERIE Joaquin will exhibit landscapes by the internationally renowned Juvenal Sanso starting March 26 in its showroom at 371 E Jose Leon St. near Bonifacio Lane, Mandaluyong. Call 7260565 and 7260566.

Featured in "Reveille of Dreams" are 16 acrylic landscapes, mostly about Brittany, on canvas or paper. Sanso is primarily known by Dominic Rubio, Bulwar Bas Reyes and the Geometria Group of Artists.

A PAINTING by Reynaldo Reis

Quartet at Astra

"ARTISTICAL and Emotional" features the quartet of Red Mamaril, Joe Ibarrola, Reynaldo Reis, and Elmer Borlongan from the College of Fine Arts of the University of the East. The show opens at the Galleria Astra (2L, LRI Business Plaza, 216 Herrera Garcia Street, Kennedy Bypass, Bel Air 2, Makati City) on March 19 at 7 p.m. It will run till April 2.

Reynaldo Reis produced the "wiki-wiki," which explores the non-soundness of wiki to people. Differing things usually considered common, Reynaldo challenges the audience's perception. Red, one of the avant-GIF "Barrio Artist Award" sculptors, tackles serious social and personal issues in his "icon" series, which takes the sculptor's motherhood as a point of departure. Borlongan, who won second prize at the recent Metrobank contest, tackles intra-personal and spiritual issues.

Call 8901988, or 7240102 and 7260015.

PORTRAIT

ISABEL Diaz beside her celebrated "Horses" (oil on canvas)

Isabel Diaz, the realist

By Carmina Sanchez
Contributor

ACCORDING to an American survey "Isabel" is the 111th most popular female first name. Famous Isabels include novelist Isabel Barreno, Queen Isabel of Spain and even St. Isabel of France. It is also the name of a notorious hurricane that hit the US.

Isabels are known to be kind and obviously women of great strength and character. And this particular Isabel's encounter with another Isabel proves that truth once more.

Isabel Diaz, although personally linked to the locally famous Diaz clan of bakeries and brains (Gloria Diaz, Rio Diaz, Benjie Diaz, et al), has also earned a name for herself as a formidable artist.

Upon meeting her, one realizes that she is first a realist then a novelist, a nerves-related, a lover, and an artist. This also makes you realize that Isabel is totally not much different from the rest, as seen from afar, is, despite all her lineage, quite normal.

So what makes Diaz normal but extraordinary? This "strange" Isabel has the magical flair for bringing life to an empty canvas. Her blessed of vivid color are exquisite. The movements of her brushes like so dynamic. And the people whose portraits she paints hold such interest to the viewer. In fact, a famous local banker once said about an oil she saw of the most important Filipino painters of our time.

On March 17, 18 and 20, Isabel Diaz comes home from New York to do a one-woman show at the Nielson Tower in Makati. Galeria Filomena's Picture of Art presents her latest work and friends are invited to the three exclusive days.

Below are highlights of the evening of talk with Isabel Diaz.

You have an art show coming up. What's new with your last show? What's the theme?

I've never done a show like this up coming event in Manila. My last one was in a warehouse where I hung all my works from top to bottom against a black backdrop. We invited close friends and family. That was years ago.

What inspired you to do this show?

Inspiration is a word that never comes up in my vocabulary. I think this time I am enjoying the most size of a canvas project. The mixed with of perspective my works and executing big about and a big project was what drove me.

Retrospect, I am just eager to present this new collection to a new breed of young art collectors.

Why the distinct interest in the various Philippine-looking art techniques?

I never went to be specific. I don't want to have to deal with my works being stereotyped or pigeonholed because women and younger generation cannot relate to others. My interest in these people is brought about by my curiosity on how to a universal and current painters can unlock especially generations and generations of art patrons.

I feel that my works are not commodities of value but my works to be appreciated. I don't want people to buy my paintings because they are a good investment... I want people to collect them because they are happy to have them hung in their homes for years and years without losing their appeal. If I achieve that, I would be happy.

What best describes your style of work?

If I either does it free explain it... It comes out in my mixed when someone comes up to me and asks me that question. It looks me feel like they don't know me or my works. But to make things simple, I consider myself a realist.

What subject, then, are you most known for?

Flowers. By sheer number of artist's best works and the stunning genius accomplishing any rendition of this subject is just nobody's equal.

You are also famous for your portraits of famous personalities and local society people. Which are your most memorable portrait works?

It's always of the men. Men who don't consider themselves good looking feel have great character so usually come out strong and marvelous works. I think I do not like the character of a man more than of a woman. For a woman character is weakened by her physical beauty which unfortunately many times is undeniably more interesting.

In addition to that, I think female clients are many come good looks. But if a woman doesn't look good, her character shouldn't to make her attractive. It's true.

In my case I think my portraits of Manolo Lopez and Philip Cruz were quite successful.

What happens when your subject has a personal element involved?

It doesn't happen. I can put my energy through the actual act of painting. When I meet or a face and I sit down to work on a portrait, I tend to liking the way the lines on the face look, how the curves come across and all other things that I don't need to see or at least I look at a person or when I talk to him or her.

You are the only Filipino who was able to do a painting of Prince Philip of England. Please share the experience with us.

Prince Philip plays polo in Florida once a year. I did polo paintings in Florida for Palm Beach Polo Club.

One year I was invited to take part in a parade. The Polo Club at the time asked out one of my paintings on the cover of its annual. From there, my name was noticed and I was given the opportunity to paint Prince Philip and his friends while playing polo.

Having been exposed just as much to foreign personalities and supportive artists in the US as you have here in Manila, would you consider yourself an NY artist or a Filipina artist?

I'm a Filipina artist who works in New York.

I think it valid that some people claim that my works are not Filipino. I ask them: So they are most of the traditional subjects or Filipino paintings and find them interesting? I don't.

Theme does not automatically define the nationality or style of a painter. There are simply the things that I enjoy and end up painting.

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"BIRDS of Paradise and Banana Leaves"

"ISABEL Diaz"

Cordillera up close and personal

By Gina Dominguez
Contributor

THEY come from places far and near, proclaiming between culture and cultural affairs, but the fact of this mountain caste most Filipino proved irresistible in these modern conditions.

Even a passing look the exhibit, "Tattooed Heritage" by Ina Cruz-Cabrera at Galleria Art Gallery, the group fans inside in a point to measure a show of their recent works, not to mention their individual exhibitions, both here and abroad.

In the current show, the Tattooed artists have mainly made to their old repertoire of Cordillera folk and culture, though some (as in the case of Leonard Ignacio and John Frank Salcedo) have made more to their by way of their predilection for folk mythology merged with a postmodern sensibility.

The evident catch the show is the most predominantly for the representational mode, which is not at all surprising, given the track record of the group and the mentoring role of their role models, particularly Sarcido and the more successful and more experienced members.

Trademark style

Take to hand, BenCab has opted to show a work in his trademark style: two figures with unmistakable indigenous features, seemingly contained, a motif we've often encountered in the others. It is perhaps their artist's way of making sense for the members, as this is to be taken in a group effort, rather than as a means to promote solid for an individual artist.

Buddy Cabrera, BenCab's nephew and new recruit, points in a manner reminiscent of his early BenCab. Seen the static tone down to the fashionable-looking image in the canvas.

Really the most striking works are those of Agustin-Sibi, with two works in colored tattoo (or that implies as a filmic drawn-dimensional measure the topography of the place, rendered to the scale of the hieroglyphics.

A return to the recent Philippine Art Awards sponsored by Philip Morris, Agustin-Sibi's three-artist singular talent and visceral imagination can excuse a rare sensibility that takes historical roots and representative approach.

Likewise, Salcedo, who has several solo shows to his credit, is experimental with two pointings by Cordillera Hero and Pilgrims, are enlightened in a room to themselves, with a mixture of wood, metal and marbles and with Salcedo's trademark strings stretched across the canvas.

In his ongoing to Carl Mangat's diptych to mixed media, "Accumulation and Fabrication," which shows mainly the artist's critical spectacle on the American colonialist policy in the eyes of the century through the infamous 1904 St. Louis Exposition.

Mangat, however has to resist on his perpetually hot velcro and learns to harness some of his most serve a visible purpose of his than valid a shows, would using his mastered skills expository.

Particularly endearing is Jose Hernando, who is usually not as a portraitist. This is evident in his work, "Tattooed Heritage" and "Pinikan," with their subtle display of iconic symbolism that run through a planet's engine, and the faces of Cordillera's children, whose mother has dedicated to learn by well abroad.

The most interesting artist this side of the Tom-tom are Ronald Ginez Mangwian, a proponent of solar painting by way of entangling glass and grass on help from the sun. Mangwian has long pursues his mastery of the technique, which leaves the imprint of a naturally shaded composition on the canvas as well as the prints ripples that appear to be undulated creation.

Roland Bayani works in a modern pointillist manner, while Tad Tolin has a new approach to still life, not just used prints but more realistic and contemporary. Both artists are multi-talented, most of the pieces in this show by artists who live close to nature.

Solo show

Elmer Gonzalez, in his 14th solo show, also pays tribute to the Cordillera folk with recent works simply called "Cordillera Series," at the Ateneo Art Gallery (until March 26).

For several years now, since he visited Sagada as the Ayala Museum's Art Documentarist, Gonzalez has been fascinated by the elemental lives of the indigenous folk in the Cordillera region. Folk, valuable exposure gained from his visits to actual sites. Gonzalez has ably captured the local people in their most telling moments, and minus the stylish contemporaneous affects in his works are most to-date.

By simply portraying the Igorot native subject and concentrating to intensely what other artists would favor lenses, conveniently for to the culturally local. Gonzalez makes a salient point to discussion the race virtues of the Cordillera inhabitants.

There is a lovely face, even modernism, a people who have pride of place and a sense of dignity to endure other groups that have fallen prey to progress and development. A tribute that only an artist steeped in the art of representation like Gonzalez can do best.

"MOTHER and Child," by Buddy Cabrera

"WOMAN," by John Frank Salcedo

APHRODITE'S "Princess Diaries"

Sotheby's series on Filipino Masters

ON MARCH 24 and 25 in 6 p.m., first Christie's Philippine representative of Sotheby's, will discuss the Filipino Masters to be featured at the Southeast Asian paintings division of Sotheby's in Singapore on April 6.

The lecture is part of a series of talks organized by Sotheby's in the Philippines to provide the public basic information on how to participate and bid at auctions. Among the highlights of the April 6 auction will be Fabian dela Rosa's 1920 painting, "Dining Laundry" several works by Fernando Amorsolo including the 1955 painting of Princess Dahaya, and a selection of modern and contemporary art by HR Ocampo (1977), Jose Joya ("Four Seasons," 1968), Arturo Luz ("Sea Mirror I & Nude"), and Jerry Elizalde Navarro ("The Beginning of the End, Almost," 2002).

The sale also includes an important Fernando Zobel, a Cubist-Oriental-inspired oil painting, a romantic lyric oil on canvas ("Floating Rice") by Theodore Francisco Buenaventura, a number of breathtaking watercolor by Vicente Manansala ("Tuba and Guitar," 1966), and paintings by Romeo V. Tabuena ("Village Scene," 1961) and Federico Aguilar Alcuaz ("Three Girls," 1966).

Call 8445241 for more details.

Outdoor sculpture for the soul

IMAGES reflected in one of the stainless steel spheres are large ground rock sky, people with camera, architecture and landscape.

ONE of the rare expositions of public art in Manila is now in the Greenbelt 3 garden and Glorietta 4 park, at Ayala Center. Large-scale work by multi-awarded sculptor Jaypi Pliapil, on view by Galeria Duranila, is on view until April 11.

In his urban ensemble (the de-cluttering alternative for a Mandarin to recharge his soul and mind, beyond projects, the now-towering Bonifacio Pod, groundbreaker of the mixed-use pyramids of Makati Boulevard and perhaps-mansions of Rizal Avenue are natural attempts that provide escape values but not enough to allow comfortable living in the city.

Public art is an overlooked urban amenity and awfully lacking in all Philippine cities. The Pliapil exhibit underscores the magnitude of that lack, illustrating that there is indeed a place for public art in our lives.

Pride of Place

Augusto F. Villalon

The artist's concept is to create an environment where everyone would be free to "touch, tickle, touch, feel, reflect with, meditate with, or find some kind of soothing feelings with the work," She reasoned to free viewers, invited them to establish a relationship, no matter how fleeting, with her work.

Within public reach

The exhibit is completely experiential. The large sculptures stand on ground-level. Others hang from trees. This is not the usual "look-only" exhibit with art pieces encased and kept out of public reach.

On the contrary, the series of sculptures is completely accessible to the public. The pieces invite visitors to walk around them, take a close look, touch and experience Pliapil's art.

The exhibit brings art to the people. Unlike in the traditional museum setting where art is detached from the viewer, Pliapil says "to break the barriers that ordinary people feel exist when it comes to art." Breaking away from the elitist misconception of art, she invites the public to mingle and interact with her pieces.

The visual and tactile experience that her public sculpture offers is an opportunity for a viewer to "pause, reach out, and have time for oneself," Pliapil says. "It is our hope that each viewer will experience some kind of truth in the silence and inner peace."

Grace of form

The sculptures elicit peace. Elegantly conceived and meticulously executed in luminous combinations of stone, marble, glass and stainless steel, each piece juxtaposes textures and contrasts materials that flow into an ocean of forms recalling the movement of water.

Inspired by the ocean, Pliapil's liquid shapes are enthralling, sprawled or tufted forms in mirror-finished stainless steel that splash, grounded by viscous multi-textured marble bases.

Her sculptures are ephemeral. Polished marble, glass and stainless steel capture the graceful motion of water, transmitting movement with strong visual clarity.

Hanging at different levels from tree branches, flat, translucent fiberglass bubbles delicately rise from the coverage of sculptured bronze squirming to connect water with the atmosphere above it. Everything works well together.

"In water has been the inherent subject of my work. I think of the ocean as one of God's life-giving gifts, enabling the universe to its silent and gentle waves, all its sparkling bubbles blessing upwards and leaving its soul to the world—as if showing the path toward heavens," says the artist when asked about her inspiration.

Mergers

In some sculptures, sleek marble shells hold bubbles of polished stainless steel spheres at eye level. The stone spheres reflect the surroundings into kaleidoscopic images merging ground with sky, city with skyscrapers. Urban greenery visually connects to the clouds, and reflections of people merge with the urban environment.

Pliapil's spheres convey another dimension to the familiar Makati cityscape. They represent an ephemeral, inner landscape that lives within the polish of each sphere, establishing an introspective mood that leads the user on a journey to its outer self.

The spaces and spheres are *golden* leading to a glimpse of universal infinity.

The dimension of inner peace that the sculptures invoke is long absent from our urban mindsets. Calm is a quality that Manilenos have learned to live without.

The exhibit shows the extent that public art enriches urban life. It shows that most layers of art easily are meant to be experienced by people and not kept out of reach in museums or locked away in private collections.

It further shows that good public art benefits city life. Imagine all Philippine cities, each enriched by public art to find not only does the quality of life improve, each city is imbued with a strong sense of identity and place.

What a shame that this exhibit ends on April 1. The true power each it adds to enrich the quality of our urban lives should be made permanent.

E-mail your comments and feedback to gfdlalon@hotmail.com

PLAPIL'S latest exercise in public art is on display at Greenbelt 3 and Glorietta 4 parks in Makati.

EMBLEMS forms of polished marble contrast with the environmental backdrop of Greenbelt Park.

SCULPTURAL wizardry at work: Pliapil's sculptures seem to emerge out of the ground as if metamorphosing into bubbles hanging from trees.